Kilili: Funeral assistance to the CNMI now at $26,584. PAGE 2
Labor: 99.7% of initial PUA claims inspected, adjudicated. PAGE 7

Hafa Adai!

$1

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXII, Issue No. 34

www.saipantribune.com | THURSDAY FEBRUARY 17, 2022 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

Over 600K Korean tourists expected

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With seven airlines wanting to provide direct flights to Saipan from all over South Korea, the CNMI is expecting to receive over 600,000 Korean tourists in the next fiscal year alone, according to Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig on Tuesday.

» '7 airlines wanting to provide direct flights to Saipan from all over South Korea, a historic first for the CNMI'

Speaking during the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee meeting presided over by Rep. Corina L. Magofna (D-Saipan), Atalig disclosed that they are expecting the resumption of the CNMI's tourism industry when more Korean tourists start coming in this March, April, and May.

He said Japanese tourists may also come because the

See OVER on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 6:48pm, Feb. 16, 2022

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Additional Dose Vaccinated: 54.4%

Days since last community transmission: 2

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	37,944
Fully Vaccinated:	36,927
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,326
Fully Vaccinated:	5,177
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,136
Additional Dose:	20,522

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	40,891	495	41,386
Recovered	35,383	42	35,425
Active	5,151	495	5,646
Deaths	308	7	315

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,587	159	7,746
Recovered	5,715	167	5,882
Active	1,680	159	1,839
Deaths	24	1	25

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

25th COVID-related death

» Guam reports 7 COVID-related deaths

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. have confirmed the CNMI's 25th COVID-19-related death.

CHCC confirmed the latest fatality in a news release issued late Tuesday night that also stated that 159 more individuals have been confirmed positive for COVID-19, bringing the CNMI total to 7,746 cases since March 26, 2020.

The same news release states that, as of Feb. 15, 2022, there are 11 individuals hospitalized as a result of COVID-19, three of them un-

See 25TH on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- Red: Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green: Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

These Chalan Piao village signs can be found north of the Chalan Piao Plaza, south towards DPA Car Mart, and As Perdido Road.

Chalan Piao friends, families unveil village welcome signs

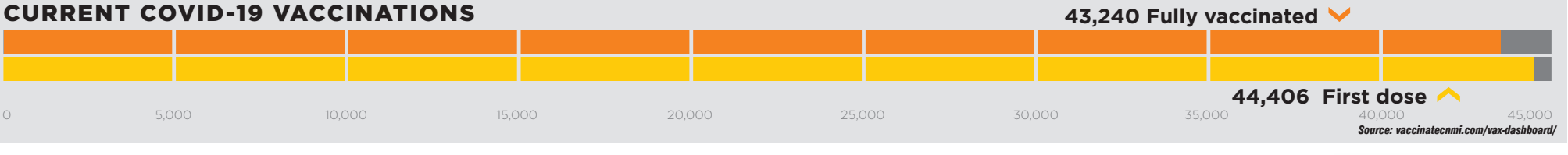
» Group announces the next three villages to receive signs

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and TanHoldings president Jerry Tan, who are co-chairmen of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers, along with their Public Private Partnership partners, have unveiled the first village entrance signs on Saipan in the village of Chalan Piao.

Spearheaded by a group of friends and families from Chalan Piao, the village now has three beautifully painted signs that welcome visitors and residents to the "gateway to the south."

See CHALAN on Page 4

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

INSIDE

BUSINESS
The Biden administration is telling Congress that it needs an additional $30 billion.
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NATION
The families of nine victims of the Sandy Hook shooting have agreed to a $73-million settlement.
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LIFE & STYLE
Prince Andrew, accused in a lawsuit of sexually abusing a 17-year-old girl, has agreed to settle.
Page 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Feb. 24 is Chamorro-Carolinian Mother Language Day

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres is joined by supporters and other dignitaries outside the Office of the Governor after he signed the proclamation that declared Feb. 24, 2022, as CNMI Chamorro-Carolinian Mother Language Day and the next 10 years as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Local

The CNMI's two indigenous languages, Chamorro and Carolinian, are taking center stage this month, with the designation of Thursday next week, Feb. 24, 2022, as CNMI Chamorro-Carolinian Mother Language Day.

Also, the next 10 years from Monday, Feb. 21, 2022, to Feb. 21, 2032, has been designated in the CNMI as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

» 2022 to 2032 is declared International Decade of Indigenous Languages

This comes soon after Gov. Ralph DLG Torres signed a proclamation yesterday at the Office of the Governor where Torres said the CNMI is joining the United Nations in declaring an International Decade of Indigenous Languages, to begin this year until 2032.

Yesterday's proclamation notes that the CNMI issued a proclamation last Feb. 24, 2020, promoting the recognition of the International Mother Language Day to promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism in the CNMI.

"Hundreds of mother languages across the world face extinction causing demise of rich cultures, heritages, customs, and folk knowledge.

"Today there is growing awareness that languages play a vital role in development, in ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, but also in strengthening cooperation and attaining quality education for all, in building inclusive knowledge societies and preserving cultural heritage, and in mobilizing political will for applying the benefits of science and technology to sustainable development.

"It is the language that we communicate and participate in all aspects of society, and through language, people preserve their community's history, customs and traditions, memory, inimitable modes of thinking, meaning, and expression, which are certainly utilized to plot and construct their future," the proclamation states.

The indigenous languages of the CNMI are Chamorro and Carolinian but the proclamation notes that both languages are in the danger of disappearing.

"I strongly encourage our CNMI family to band together and raise awareness about the importance of supporting the goals and ideals of Mother Language Day and to bring attention to the importance of preserving linguistic and cultural heritage throughout the Commonwealth…by means of speaking and writing in the language, displaying exhibits, posters, signs, playing music, and performing dances to promote our mother languages," he said. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Kilili: Funeral assistance to the CNMI now at $26,584

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Funeral assistance to those in the CNMI who lost someone to COVID-19 now stands at $26,584, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP).

In his e-kilili newsletter over the weekend, Sablan said the Federal Emergency Management Agency's COVID funeral assistance program continues to help families in the Marianas.

Sablan

He said the U.S. Congress provided this aid in the 2021 Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. said Tuesday that, as of Feb. 13, 2022, there have been 24-COVID-19 related deaths in the CNMI.

As of Feb. 13, 2022, there are 11 individuals in the CNMI who are hospitalized as a result of COVID-19, three of them unvaccinated and eight vaccinated. One of the 11 is on a ventilator.

Sablan said applicants for funeral assistance must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals, or qualified aliens.

He said the death must have occurred in the United States and have been caused by the coronavirus.

"To apply for the aid, call toll-free to (844) 684-6333 from 9am to 9pm. ET, Monday through Friday," Sablan said.

Patrick C. Guerrero, who is the governor's authorized representative to FEMA, earlier stated that the COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Program is a direct assistance program, which means the individual will have to apply on their own.

Guerrero said the program is available to applicants in the CNMI who have incurred funeral expenses due to the virus on or after Jan. 20, 2020.

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Torres' statement on attorney fees for JGO witnesses

Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres issued yesterday the following statement regarding attorney fees paid for legal representation of government employees subpoenaed by the House Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations:

"As I have previously stated, since the beginning, I have extended many invitations to members of the Legislature regarding potential questions or concerns they may have or just to have fair and open conversations. However, they chose to take a different route that included subpoenaing, investigating, and questioning several dedicated government workers, taking precious time away from the performing of their important duties. Everyone has a right to counsel, most especially CNMI government employees who are hauled in to testify before the JGO Committee hearings. All these employees, including myself, were served with a subpoena.

"Still, despite the answers given truthfully and under oath by the witnesses subpoenaed to the JGO Committee hearings, members of the committee were not satisfied. This is because they had a political agenda to fulfill. Furthermore, the hearings did not materialize to any concrete reasons for my impeachment and were solely based on a narrative created by those very members, that I am some corrupt governor because they disagree with the legal authorities granted to me as governor of this Commonwealth to spend funding as I see as fit and proper.

"When those who were subpoenaed by the JGO Committee requested representation from the Attorney General's Office pursuant to law, the requests were denied due to possible conflicts of interest. Because of the AGO's denial of representation, private attorneys had to be hired, all of whom were approved by the attorney general to provide legal representation. This was particularly true in the matter concerning my own legal representation in my official capacity as governor. It was essential that I received representation by an attorney, including expert attorneys in this subject matter, as the setting, format, and lines of questioning asked across our branches of government contradict the separation of powers clause of the Constitution.

"At the end of the day, the JGO Committee is to blame for these private attorney expenses. These witnesses, who were subpoenaed in their official capacities, are not experts in these legal formal proceedings. Additionally, the right to counsel is one of the most important, basic rights granted by both the CNMI and U.S. constitutions. Therefore, I support their decisions to invoke their rights as they saw fit in order to protect their freedoms from biased lines of questioning and potential legal ramifications. If I was requested to approve hiring private attorneys for these employees, I would also approve the request in order to protect the rights that all CNMI government employees have. To deny protecting these CNMI government employees their right to counsel would be a violation of their constitutional rights." ***(PR)***

Two lost hikers found

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A couple who went hiking late Tuesday afternoon got lost in the Marpi area, but were later found after one of them managed to call the police dispatch.

At around 6:51pm last Tuesday, a female caller called 911 reporting that she and her husband were in the Marpi area and got lost while hiking on one of the trails near the old abandoned Radar Station.

It was learned that the couple had gone out earlier that afternoon and got lost while they were looking for the hiking trail.

At 6:53 pm, Engine-2, Rescue- 1, Medic-2, and back-up medic responded to the described location. At 7:05om, back-up medic was the first to arrive on scene and search the area for the hikers and their vehicle.

The couple was later directed to contact responding units of the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services.

One of the hikers managed to call Capt. Pat Ogo, Search and Rescue Unit commander. He then stayed on the phone and helped guide the hikers out to their location.

At around 7:49pm, Ogo and another member of his SARU Team got in contact with the missing hikers. Fire Personnel from Medic 2 hiked to their location for a health and wellness assessment.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Responding units of the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services and Department of Public Safety coordinated their search for the lost hikers.

Fortunately, both hikers were in good health and had no injuries.

After supplying them with some water and ample rest, the couple was escorted to safety and both refused further medical treatment.

At 9:33pm, the responding officers gave an "all clear" and all responding units returned to base.

$5K bail imposed on two accused of breaking into The Shack

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Superior Court has imposed a $5,000 cash bail each on two men who are accused of breaking into The Shack restaurant and stealing an iPhone and gift certificates.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho imposed Monday a $5,000 cash bail each on Manuel A. Ada, 26, and Charley Joenel Enriquez, 18, who are facing charges of burglary, theft, and conspiracy for allegedly breaking and entering into The Shack in Oleai on Feb. 13, and stealing an iPhone and some gift certificates.

Both men were remanded back to the Department of Corrections and were ordered to return to court on Feb. 23 at 10am for a preliminary hearing, and their arraignments were set for March 7 at 9am.

According to court documents, police had responded at around 4:38am on Feb. 13 to a burglary and theft incident at The Shack in Oleai.

The Shack supervisor told police that he received notification from the surveillance camera inside the establishment that someone was in the restaurant. The supervisor said they had not been keeping cash in the restaurant since their last break-in, but an iPhone was missing.

Police at the scene saw one of the restaurant's windows shattered with glass on the patio and the ground. An officer also observed blood stains on the floor and on the window frame that had a large piece of glass still attached. The officer also observed two rocks on the ground.

Meanwhile, other police officers on patrol pulled over a vehicle last seen in the area. The passengers of the vehicle were Ada and Enriquez.

A patrol officer told the driver that The Shack had been broken into a few minutes ago and the driver's vehicle was the only one seen leaving the area of the crime scene. An officer asked whether any of them had any injuries.

The driver then told Ada and Enriquez to tell the truth and to get out of the vehicle.

When the two passengers got out of the vehicle, an officer saw that Enriquez's hands were bleeding and that he was trying to conceal it.

The driver told the police that he had no knowledge of what the two did. He said he was stopped by Ada and Enriquez, and they asked him to give them a ride to Chalan Kanoa.

While the officers were questioning Ada and Enriquez, The Shack's supervisor called the iPhone that was missing. One of the officers then heard a phone ringing from Ada's pocket.

In a freely given statement to the police, Enriquez admitted breaking into The Shack by throwing a rock into the window. He said he entered the restaurant and started to search in a drawer that was next to a computer. He didn't find any cash but found five envelopes and an iPhone. Enriquez then met with Ada at the store across The Shack.

The two then walked to the San Jose Mobil gas station where they met with Ada's uncle who was going to give them a ride to Chalan Kanoa.

CHALAN

From Page 1

"I would like to extend my greatest thanks and appreciation to the friends and families of Team Chalan Piao, specifically GCEA executive director Chris A. Concepcion, council member Joe C. Guerrero, Cathy Attao-Toves, and Sean T. White, for spearheading the Chalan Piao village entrance signs project. I applaud their dedication to the beautification of our islands and the improvement of our quality of life through the Marianas Village Pride campaign," said Torres.

Concepcion, who is a longtime resident of Chalan Piao and the project's co-leader, said the group envisioned the plan to construct village entrance signs to support the GCEA's Marianas Village Pride campaign. "We aimed to beautify our village and to inform the public that they are entering Chalan Piao," he said. "Every village has its unique character, and the new signs help to convey the spirit and hospitality of the village.

"Interestingly, archaeological records prove that Chalan Piao was one of the first areas in the Marianas to be settled by ancient Chamorros almost 4,000 years ago. The families in Chalan Piao have been here for generations. We take pride in our village because we have roots here. It's important to mark the borders of Chalan Piao not only for geographical reasons but also for informational purposes since many people are not aware of exactly where the borders are," he added.

The group completed its first MVP project in November 2021 by painting the medians that run along Chalan Piao's main thoroughfare. Soon after, they got to work on finding the funding, contractors, and artists to bring the signs to life.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

25TH

From Page 1

ies; 1,839 active cases; and 25 COVID-19-related deaths.

On the vaccination front, a total of 71 COVID-19 vaccine shots were administered on Feb. 15, 2022; of the eligible population, 54.8% have received an additional dose. The vaccination rate is calculated using the 2020 Census population estimates for the CNMI and includes the eligible 5-years-old and older population.

A total of 654 COVID-19 tests were conducted on Feb. 14, 2022.

In Guam, the territory's 309th COVID-19-related fatality occurred at the Guam Regional Medical City on Feb. 4, 2022. The patient was a 51-year-old female, partially vaccinated, with underlying health conditions who tested positive on Feb. 2, 2022.

The 310th COVID-19-related fatality was pronounced dead on arrival at GRMC on Feb. 10, 2022. The patient was a 44-year-old female, fully vaccinated, without a booster shot, with underlying health conditions who tested positive on Feb. 5, 2022.

The 311th COVID-19-related fatality occurred at GRMC on Feb. 12, 2022. The patient was a 91-year-old male, unvaccinated, with underlying health conditions who tested positive on Feb. 4, 2022.

The 312th COVID-19-related fatality occurred at GRMC on Feb. 12, 2022. The patient was a 65-year-old female, unvaccinated, with underlying health conditions who tested positive on Feb. 3, 2022.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

OVER

From Page 1

Torres administration is currently working with a travel bubble program with Japan.

He said the China market is out of the picture at the moment, but Chinese tourists may resume coming to the CNMI down the road.

"We are focusing on the markets that are wanting to come to our islands," he said.

Rep. Richard Lizama (D-Saipan) asked if the surge of COVID-19 cases in the CNMI would affect the anticipated increase in the number of Korean tourists.

Atalig said the Marianas Visitors Authority could probably answer that question, but his opinion based on his communication with MVA and the hotel industry is that they are still anticipating the sustained increase in tourists from the South Korea market. Atalig said six low-cost carriers in South Korea have all submitted letters of intent to service the CNMI with direct flights from all over Korea.

"That's the first time in history that's ever happened. We've always had two or three low-cost carriers and one main flagship, and that's Asiana Air," he said.

In response to Lizama's question whether the CNMI gained or incurred a loss with the travel bubble program, Atalig said they had anticipated zero revenue coming in from the Korea tourism bubble but the CNMI did gain in terms of traction in the market and in terms of investments.

"It is an investment that we did so we haven't realized any, as you would say in the business world, profit yet," the secretary said.

Atalig said the CNMI basically had an internal local economy in fiscal year 2021 as it did not have any revenues generated by any other industry.

He noted that tourism industry halted in March of 2020 and hasn't gained any traction until the CNMI signed a travel bubble program with South Korea.

Atalig said the travel bubble was very promising in that they had numbers that were surprising.

He said they had anticipated upwards of 10,000 Korean visitors in December, but that got scuttled by the surge in omicron cases, which affected the tourism industry worldwide, triggering a lot of flights cancellation.

"We are looking forward to that being resumed. We learn from tourism industry and those that are in South Korea that the numbers will continue to grow," he said.

As MVA and the administration work on a travel bubble with Japan, Atalig said they are hoping they can have some charter flights in time for the Japanese holiday period. He said they are working with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, as well as the State Department, to help the CNMI secure this travel arrangement with Japan.

"We're being optimistic, but I'm being cautious. So I'm not expecting a big, large number [from the Japan market]," Atalig said.

He said the goal is to get the CNMI tourism market started so that, as people learn to live with COVID-19, travelers will start coming back to the islands.

Atalig said the American Rescue Plan Act funding allowed the CNMI to make significant progress in resuming the tourism market and to get the Commonwealth a step ahead of market competitors. He said ARPA has been able to keep all government employees employed, as well as lifting of the austerity, within the fiscal year 2021 budget year.

"So there's significant amounts of investments through the ARPA that allowed our government to be full and to be whole, and that we have our employees contribute to our local economy," the secretary said.

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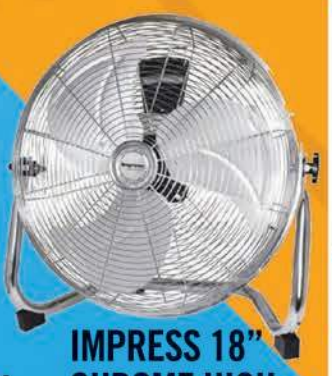

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NORTHERN MARIANAS PACIFIC MINI GAMES 2022

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

LOGISTICS SUPERVISOR
Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022

Job Description:
The Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 Organizing Committee wishes to recruit a Logistics Supervisor to be responsible for the overall coordination of all Games Logistics. The individual in this position will report directly to the NMPMG 2022 CEO. The incumbent will need to build and maintain good relationships through your ability to move materials, goods and products to ensure that they are in the right place to meet the necessary logistics needs of the Games Organizing Committee and other stakeholder groups such as the Northern Marianas Sports Association (NMSA), Pacific Games Council (PGC) and National Federations.

Duties and Responsibilities:
- Responsible for ensuring the right products and quantities are delivered to the right location on time and in the most effective way.
- Collaborate with the relevant Committee members on venue requirements and ensure all building contacts are fully informed of capacity and requests.
- Coordinate signage and set-up in preparation for the Games.
- Oversee the management of external supplies and other materials needed by the Committee.
- Support event logistics needs throughout the Games
- Collaborate with the CEO to give strategic direction to Logistics volunteers.
- Attend and participate in the NMPMG 2022 meetings
- Contribute to a strong team relationship which emphasizes teamwork and communication.
- Build strategic relationships with various campus and community partners who support the Games.
- Other assigned duties.

Essential Qualities:
- Prior experience working in Logistics.
- Willingness to perform tasks within short timeframes
- Ability to manage high numbers of requests
- Previous experience in event planning
- Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively with different audiences
- Strong public relations, teamwork, and organization skills
- Enthusiastic personality
- Ability to meet deadlines and work well under pressure
- Strong interpersonal, organizational, and project management skills
- Demonstrated initiative; ability to recognize problems quickly and apply sound solutions
- Results-oriented and reliable

Hours of Work:
This is a full-time position (36 hours weekly) with occasional work outside of normal work hours.

Salary: $3000.00 per month (March 2022 – June 2022)

Language: Fluency in English, Chamorro and or Carolinian an advantage.

How to Apply: If you meet the above requirement and are interested in the position, please send a resume or curriculum vitae along with a cover letter to the following postal or email address:

Postal Mail: Logistics Supervisor NMPMG2022 Application
P.O. Box 502476
Saipan, MP 96950

Email: vicente.babauta@gmail.com or marianassports@gmail.com

All applications must be received no later than 5:00 pm, February 22, 2022

Contact Person: Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022, GOC Chairman Marco Peter
Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022, CEO Vicente "Ben" Babauta

NMTI NORTHERN MARIANAS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

NORTHERN MARIANAS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
P.O. Box 504880 Saipan MP 96950
Tel. No.: (670) 323.6601
Procurement Office

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL:

INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT FOR THE NORTHERN MARIANAS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
RFP-NMTI/2022-002

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute and the Board of Trustees are soliciting competitive sealed proposals from individuals or firms interested in providing services for Independent Consultant for the Northern Marianas Technical Institute.

The Scope of Work is available beginning February 10, 2022 at the NMTech Procurement Office, located at the NMTech Main Office, Lower Base. Request may be sent via email to Ms. Amy Lynn Babauta at amy.babauta@nmtechcnmi.org.

Questions must be in writing and addressed to Ms. Amy Lynn Babauta and may be sent via email at amy.babauta@nmtechcnmi.org no later than February 16, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. Response to questions will be on February 18, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. Electronic submissions will be accepted if approved prior to the submission deadline.

Proposals shall be in a sealed envelope marked RFP-NMTI/2022-002 – containing (1) original and three (3) copies and submitted to the NMTech Procurement Office no later than February 24, 2022 at 1:00pm. Any proposals received after the aforementioned date and time will not be accepted under any circumstances.

/s/ Jodina C. Attao
CEO

/s/ Amy Lynn Babauta
Procurement Officer

SDA wants negligence suit dismissed

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Seventh-Day Adventist Dental Clinic has asked the Superior Court to dismiss the lawsuit filed by a woman alleging negligence on SDA's part for burning her daughter's face and leaving her with a disfigured facial scar.

In a response filed by SDA and Dr. Steven Debulgado through attorney Maria K. Schultz of Marianas Legal Strategy Group LLC, the defendants asked the court to dismiss the laawsuit filed by Daelina Aguon on behalf of her child alleging negligence.

Schultz said her clients deny negligence on their part and also want the court to award them legal costs.

The lawyer argued that Aguon lacks legal authority and standing to assert claims on behalf of her daughter, the plaintiff, and has not complied with necessary procedural requirements to assert any such claims.

Schultz added that Aguon alleged injuries and damages that were not proximately or legally caused by any negligence or wrongful conduct on the part of the dental clinic.

According to the lawsuit, back in Jan. 15, 2020, the child visited the SDA clinic to have silver crowns put on some of her teeth. The crown application procedure was performed by Debulgado.

While the child was getting the silver crown affixed, the "hot metal applicator machine" allegedly burned her face, creating a large open lesion at the corner of her mouth. However, because the child was under anesthesia, she was allegedly unaware that her face was being burned by the machine.

According to the lawsuit, neither Debulgado nor any of the other employees noticed that the child's face was being burned by the machine.

When the anesthesia wore off, the child became aware of her injury, and suffered acute pain, suffering and distress, the lawsuit stated. The child's wound gradually healed, but allegedly continued to cause discomfort and distress to her for several weeks.

The lawsuit said that as the wound healed, it left a disfiguring facial scar, which remains to this day, and continues to cause distress to the child.

Aguon, through attorney Joseph Horey, filed the lawsuit in Superior Court back in December 2021 on behalf of her child and wants the court to award them an unspecified amount of damages for pain, suffering, and emotional distress.

MANGO offers 2 free webinars

The Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations and its federal partners is pleased to announce two free webinars that are open to the CNMI public:

The first one, called "EEOC Webinar on Vaccine Accommodations, Retaliation, and Interface," will be held on Friday, Feb. 18, 2022, at 9am.

In this online training, the U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission will provide a brief overview of the EEOC's Guidance on COVID-19 and specifically reasonable accommodations as it relates to vaccine mandates. The webinar will also provide an overview of reasonable accommodations due to disability and/or religion, and an employee's rights under the law. Finally, the webinar will explain that retaliation is prohibited against those who have requested accommodation and that an employer cannot interfere with the right to do so.

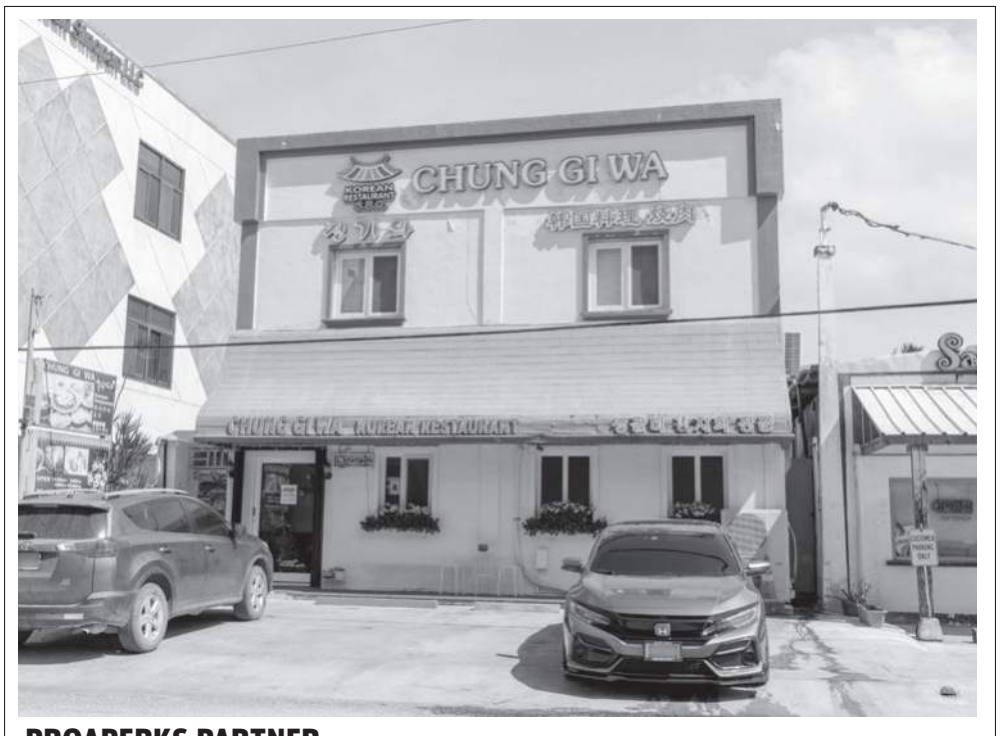
MANGO will be live streaming this event at the MANGO Resource Center. Participants interested in joining our watch party can send an email toadmin@mangocnmi.org to secure a spot, seats are limited.

The second webinar, "Grant Writing Training - ANA Pre-Application," will be on Feb. 23-25, 2022 from 9am to 12pm.

The Administration for Native Americans is hosting a Pre-Application Training that will go over the step-by-step process on how to submit an application, take a deep dive into the criteria details of what reviewers are looking for, and share tips on how to articulate the strengths of your community-based project effectively.

MANGO will be live streaming this three-day ANA webinar on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, Feb. 23-25, 2022 at 9am in the MANGO Resource Room. Participants interested in joining this watch party & training can send an email toadmin@mangocnmi.org to secure a spot, seats are limited.

MANGO's principal purpose is to provide leadership and technical assistance for non-profit organizations in the CNMI. The MANGO Resource Room is located in Springs Plaza, Middle Road, Gualo Rai. For more information, contact the MANGO office at (670) 233-6200 or via email: admin@mangocnmi.org. ***(PR)***



PROAPERKS PARTNER NMC

Chung Gi Wa Restaurant is the latest business to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks Partner, joining many other businesses and organizations. All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive a free iced tea and 10% discount for orders that are $50 or more. More information about their special promotion for ProaPerks card holders can be found at marianas.edu/proaperks.

Labor: 99.7% of initial PUA claims inspected, adjudicated

The CNMI Department of Labor announced Tuesday that, as of Feb. 15 this year, 99.7% of all initial Pandemic Unemployment Assistance claims in the CNMI have been inspected and adjudicated—approved or denied.

The department received over 39,000 PUA claims during its application intake process from June 17, 2020 to Oct. 16, 2021.

■ Specifically, the department provides the following claims data:

• Claims received: 39,174

Non-CNMI jurisdiction/ fraud claims: 18,002

• CNMI jurisdiction claims: 21,172

■ Claims approved: 9,749

■ Claims denied: 29,312 (inclusive of non-jurisdiction/ fraudulent claims)

■ Claims pending: 113

The department reports that the remaining claims were those received during the American Rescue Plan Act periods of assistance (March 14 to Oct. 16, 2021) and beyond.

"While the periods of assistance afforded by the ARPA has ended for several months now, the PUA program has not closed its door to the community at large," said Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente. "The department is still open to serve individuals who wish to submit a claim because we want to ensure that we account for those who were not able to submit claims for the allowable periods of assistance due to exigent circumstances.

Benavente conceded that there has been an increase in the number of DOL staff affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused more delays in the processing of PUA claims, "but we will continue to help everyone, and expedite claims in accordance with federal rules and guidelines."

Payment disbursements

Benefit payment disbursements to PUA claimants occur on a weekly basis. To date, the department reports that $134,695,316 in PUA and $137,652,030 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits, totaling $272,347,346 have been disbursed to eligible claimants.

Overpayments and waivers

As recently as Feb. 7, 2022, the U.S. Department of Labor published further PUA guidance through Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 20-21, Change 1. A copy of this publication can be found at the CNMI Department of Labor website at www.marianaslabor.net under "Forms & Publications."

The UIPL elaborates on the criteria for waiving the recovery of overpayments where an individual is without fault on an individual, case-by-case basis and expands the existing limited scenarios for permissible use of "blanket waivers." In addition, fraudulent overpayments may never be waived.

Further, two conditions must be met prior to the territory (in this case, the CNMI) waiving any overpayments: (1) Payment of such compensation was without fault on the part of any such individual and (2) such repayment would be contrary to equity and good conscience.

The UIPL also provides seven scenarios for states or territories to use blanket waivers, but only five of the seven apply to the CNMI:

1. The individual answered "no" to being able to work and available for work and the state paid PUA or PEUC without adjudicating the eligibility issue. Upon requesting additional information from the individual, the individual either did not respond or the individual confirmed that they

were not able to work nor available for work for the week in question, resulting in an overpayment for that week.

2. When an individual is eligible for payment under an unemployment benefit program for a given week, but through no fault of the individual, they were instead incorrectly paid under either the PUA or PEUC program at a higher WBA.

3. The individual answered "no" to being unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because of the approved COVID-19 related reasons and the state paid PUA anyway. Upon requesting a new self-certification, the individual either did not respond or the individual confirmed that none of the approved COVID-19 related reasons were applicable, and the state's payment resulted in an overpayment for that week.

4. Through no fault of the individual, the state paid the individual a minimum PUA WBA based on Disaster Unemployment Assistance guidance that was higher than the state's minimum PUA WBA provided in UIPL No. 03-20, which resulted in an overpayment.

5. The individual complied with instructions from the state to submit proof of earnings to be used in calculating their PUA WBA. However, through no fault of the individual, the state's instructions were either inadequate or the state incorrectly processed this calculation using self-employment gross income instead of net income or documents from an inapplicable tax year, resulting in an incorrect higher PUA WBA. The state or Territory establishes an overpayment for the difference in PUA WBA.

Finally, the UIPL states that when an overpayment does not meet the criteria for recovery to be waived or the state does not exercise the authority to waive certain overpayments, the state must require the individual to repay the amount to which they were not entitled.

According to the CNMI Department of Labor, as of today, all overpayment waivers, whether individual case-by-case or blanket, will go through an appeals process. The department is currently vetting all overpayment cases to determine whether claims meet any of the blanket waiver criteria and will be notifying claimants who are eligible for waivers. The department also recognizes the importance of streamlining its waiver procedures and will be notifying applicable claimants on an individual basis.

To date, the CNMI PUA program's Benefit Payment Control unit has identified $32,481,549 in overpayments and has collected $28,896,200.

PUA appeals process

The department establishes a PUA appeals process through its Administrative Hearing Office. According to the AHO, the following process has been established for PUA cases:

1. Request to appeal: Requests must be filed at the Administrative Hearing Office within 10 calendar days after the determination, redetermination, or notice of overpayment is issued.

2. Notice of hearing: A notice of hearing will be issued with a date and time for the hearing including instructions on how to prepare for the hearing.

3. Hearing: The hearing will be held and the Hearing Officer will consider all relevant evidence to determine if the determination, redetermination, or notice of overpayment was correct.

4. Decision: The Hearing Officer will issue a written decision regarding the outcome of the appeal case.

5. Request to reopen: In the event the appellant would like to contest the decision, the appellant must file a written request to reopen with legal, factual, or evidentiary reasons as to why the decision was wrong.

6. If request to reopen is granted: If a request to reopen is granted, a second hearing is conducted, and a Final Decision is issued.

7. If request to reopen is denied: If a request to reopen is denied, the original decision is final.

8. Judicial review: If the appellant disagrees with a Final Decision, the appellant may seek judicial review within 30 days at the CNMI Superior Court.

The AHOs PUA appeals process can also be found at the department's website under "Divisions," then "Administrative Hearing Office," under "Resources" or https://www.marianaslabor.net/default.asp?secID=24.

As a reminder, claimants are responsible for providing true and accurate information, reading the PUA benefit rights information handbook, and complying with requests for information. To maintain program integrity and prevent fraud or overpayments from occurring, PUA program.

For more information, contact the CNMI Department of Labor-PUA Program at 322-8870/8871/8872/8873/8874 or email info@puamarianas.com. ***(PR)***

NEW WAVE DENTAL

Dental Assistant Needed
Renewal (1) Full-Time

New Wave Dental is looking for one employee to work as Dental Assistant. Must have (12) twelve months experience in dental assisting. Applicants must have knowledge in dental procedure and dental terminology and be familiar with CDT Code and Nomenclature.

Interested applicants may submit their CV or Resume at the office location in Microbeach Road, Garapan SaipanMP 96950 during working hours from Tuesday to Saturday from 8:30 to 5:30. Interested applicant may also contact Dr. Michael Hall at telephone number (670) 233-3300 or (670)483-4868. Interested applicant may also send their CV or Resume at email address newwavedentalsaipan@hotmail.com or mikehalldds @hotmail.com

Albertha Lynn Kanemoto-Hossain
2546F South 11th Street
JBLM, WA 98433
253-290-7560

Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Adoption of: N.S.M.H. A Minor Child By: Albertha Lynn Kanemoto-Hossain and Mohammed Omar Hossain Petitioners	:	FCD-AD-CIVIL ACTION NO. 19-0530 NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on March 9, 2022 at 9:00a.m. in Courtroom 217A, before Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Dated this 12th day of January, 2022.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court
/s/ By: Deputy Clerk of Court

Albertha Lynn Kanemoto-Hossain
2546F South 11th Street
JBLM, WA 98433
253-290-7560

Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the Matter of the Petition for the Adoption of: J.H.H. A Minor Child By: Albertha Lynn Kanemoto-Hossain and Mohammed Omar Hossain Petitioners	:	FCD-AD-CIVIL ACTION NO. 19-0531 NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on March 9, 2022 at 9:00a.m. in Courtroom 217A, before Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Dated this 6th day of January, 2022.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court
/s/ By: Deputy Clerk of Court

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

NMHC JVA NO.	Positions:	Salary:	Opening Date	Closing Date
2022-009	CDBG-DR Construction Inspector (1-Position)	UNGRADED $25,000.00 to $30,000.00 per annum	Feb. 3, 2022	Feb. 18, 2022 4:00 PM

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information can be accessed at www.nmhcgov.net and www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; the CDBG-DR Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Ladera Building, Chalan Laulau, Beach Road; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre- employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447 or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net. NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Accountant – JMC-2022-02, Saipan, CNMI

ACCOUNTANT,
Joeten Motor Company, Inc., Saipan, CNMI

Overall in-charge of the accounting and administrative operations of the Company. Report to the management regarding the finances of the Company. Formulate and implement office policies and procedures for the entire operations of the Company. Prepare, examine, and analyze accounting records, financial statements, or other financial reports to assess accuracy, completeness, and in conformity to reporting and general accepted accounting principle (GAAP) acceptable to the United States. Prepare company budget and monitoring budget versus actual expenses. Performs General Ledger posting, reconciliation, prepare balance sheet schedule on a monthly basis, such as preparation of Fixed assets lapsing schedule, pre-payments, accruals of expenses. Compiles Financial Statements in conformity with auditors requirements. Calculate CNMI and federal government taxes on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Prepares individual and corporate income tax returns for the Company. Responds to CNMI Revenue and IRS letters and prepares necessary documents needed to correct and comply tax filing. Prepares recommendations to the top management, with regards to meeting company budget, cost cutting measures, and help in the implementation of company set policies.

Minimum Requirements: Bachelor's degree in Accounting, Finance, or related field, foreign educational equivalent accepted, plus 2 years experience in general accounting functions. Able to supervise accounting and administrative staff. Knowledge in preparing Financial Statement in conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principle (GAAP). Good oral and communication skills. Good interpersonal qualities.

Salary: $ 15.95 per hour.

Workplace: BEACH ROAD SAN JOSE VILLAGE, JOETEN MOTORS BUILDING Saipan, CNMI

To apply: Please send your resume to Joeten Motor Company, Inc., PO BOX 500680, Saipan, MP 96950 or e-mail to josephine_b@joetenmotors.com Job Number – **JMC-2022-02**

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Dangerous stand on coronavirus vaccine mandates is spreading

Anti-science extremism is now spreading like a virus on the political right. Legislation in some red states seeks to roll back vaccination requirements not just for the coronavirus but for any other disease—potentially even preventing schools from enforcing long-existing requirements that students be vaccinated against polio, measles and the like. It sounds extreme, but in fact it's the logical outcome of the irrational conservative backlash against coronavirus vaccination mandates.

Vaccines have saved an incalculable number of lives in the past century. Smallpox, a deadly scourge throughout the history of civilization, has been eradicated globally for almost half a century now. Once-common and dangerous childhood diseases like polio, measles and whooping cough have been brought under control by school vaccination mandates in place for generations, without significant controversy.

It takes a special kind of historical ignorance to imagine that, on balance, the minimal risk inherent in vaccines is remotely commensurate with the massive harm these various diseases have inflicted on humanity down through the ages—and could again, if left unchallenged. That's why, until recently, America's anti-vaccination movement was a minor fringe.

But that has changed. For reasons that have more to do with political identification than medical facts, large swaths of the Republican Party have come to view the remarkably successful coronavirus vaccines developed during the Trump administration as a political enemy—something to be rejected and opposed. The most reasonable among them couch their opposition as being not against the vaccines themselves but against vaccine mandates for employment, travel or other forms of societal participation. Even that stance, though, ignores the fact that vaccine mandates have been around in various forms almost as long as vaccines have been around.

Critics of this latest anti-vaccination movement frequently ask why they oppose these mandates for the coronavirus but not, for example, vaccination mandates for measles and mumps in schools. Isn't that inconsistent?

Now, some Republican state lawmakers around America are answering that question with a disturbing step toward consistency. Pending Republican legislation in Georgia would ban the state from requiring "proof of any vaccination of any person as a condition of providing any service or access to any facility." Sponsors claim the measure isn't aimed at school vaccine requirements but, as written, it certainly would seem to invalidate those requirements. Pending Wisconsin legislation is more explicit, specifically prohibiting schools from excluding students based on their

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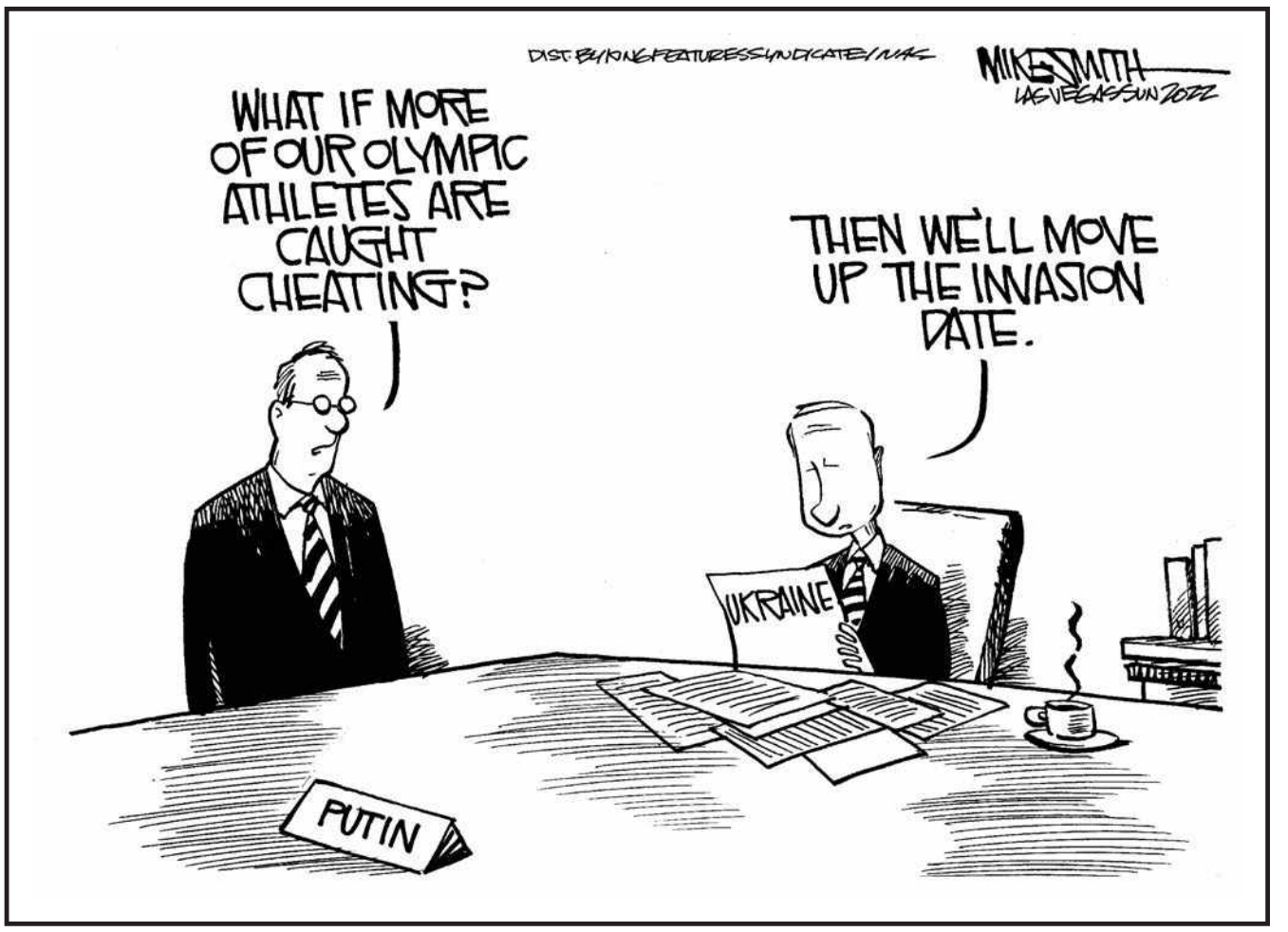
DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE/NIAC
MIKE SMITH
LAS VEGAS SUN 2022
WHAT IF MORE OF OUR OLYMPIC ATHLETES ARE CAUGHT CHEATING?
THEN WE'LL MOVE UP THE INVASION DATE.
UKRAINE
PUTIN

Biden should put the CDC in its place

By MATTHEW YGLESIAS
Bloomberg Opinion

Matthew Yglesias is a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion *and writes the* Slow Boring *blog and newsletter. A co-founder and former columnist for Vox, he is also the author, most recently, of* One Billion Americans.

As Democratic governors race to relax mask mandates and other COVID-19 restrictions for a post-omicron world, it's natural to wonder: When will the federal government see the light and let airline passengers and Amtrak riders take their masks off?

Technically, this is a question for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which issued the federal mask mandates. As a scientific agency, the CDC is supposed to base its decisions on scientific facts rather than political realities. But in the real world it's bizarre to imagine a scenario in which President Joe Biden's administration remains to the left of the governors of New York, Massachusetts and California on a high-salience issue on which there is partisan political conflict.

I live in Washington and often take the train to visit my father in New York. So it's possible that in the near future I will be able to ride the Metro maskless to Amtrak's Union Station, then have to put a mask on when I board the train to New York, then take it off to ride the subway uptown to his house. It's all a bit ridiculous. Federalism is fine, and it's unrealistic to ask for total uniformity in policy. But the federal government shouldn't be an extreme outlier on a topic on which states have reached consensus.

And yet: It would be unseemly for the White House to lean on the CDC to change its scientific recommendation on the basis of a pure political concern. This is especially true for an administration that made a big deal out of its promises to "follow the science."

The problem is that science does not offer answers to policy questions, and never has—a truth that's taken for granted in other contexts.

On alcohol consumption, for example, the CDC recommends one drink a day or fewer for women, and two or fewer for men. No state, not even Utah, has entrenched these recommendations in policy. They don't not only because such a policy would be unpopular, but also because enforcement would be extremely difficult. You'd end up either with a very weakly enforced rule that makes the state government look ridiculous, or a draconian enforcement regime. In both cases, the policy would become increasingly unpopular. And last, even though the public health benefits of restricting alcohol consumption are very real, they would primarily accrue to the drinkers themselves, which weakens the case for mandates—especially in a country with a deeply entrenched tradition of individualism.

And so we arrive at the status quo—drinking alcohol, including in large quantities, is legal in all 50 states. And since there is a wide political consensus that alcohol should be legal, you're allowed to drink three beers while riding on Amtrak even though the CDC says you shouldn't.

But—and this is critical—the policy solution isn't to lean on the CDC to lie and say that booze is healthy. The solution is simply to ignore the CDC.

This is going to be important on the mask question, because scientifically speaking it's never going to stop being the case that it's better for public health for everyone to wear masks. COVID-19 is unlikely to vanish in the future.

But even if it did, it's not the only respiratory virus. And even though the influenza and common cold viruses are less deadly than COVID-19, they are not harmless. It is a true scientific and medical fact that if people wear high-quality masks every time they go indoors, transmission of viruses will decrease. The CDC also recommends against eating runny egg yolks and says that all grilled steaks or burgers should be at least medium-well or well-done.

Asking the CDC to align its meat recommendation with the political reality that nobody is going to ban medium-rare steak would be absurd. The recommendation is, to the best of my understanding, grounded in genuine science. But for most people, eating flavorful meat is worth risking an increased exposure to bacteria.

Applying the same logic to masks, it's unreasonable to expect the CDC to recommend that they can ever come off. So the Biden administration should let the caution-minded public health experts at the CDC continue to dispense their cautious advice on masks—and then the president should ignore their advice and lift mandates to bring federal policy into line with what even blue states are doing.

Straightforwardly ignoring expert public health advice will ultimately be better for science and neutral expertise than Biden's current course of deferring to them. Science does not render politics obsolete. And in practice, the White House's deferential posture means leaning on the CDC to make politically convenient decisions, rather than having elected officials make choices and take responsibility for them.

If the president is worried about breaking campaign promises, he should rest easy. There are a lot of unrealistic promises he made—to bring people together, for example, unite the country and restore the

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EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

The impact of isolation on mental health and people with disabilities

By TIAVA TO'OMATA
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Tiava To'omata is a program aide at the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc.

Recently, I became a part of an ever-growing local statistic. Not just any statistic, but *that* statistic that we all hope not to be a part of these days. After being confirmed positive for COVID-19 with two antigen test results, and the full nine yards of symptoms, I was ordered to quarantine and isolate myself at the government quarantine site for 10 days, as per the protocols at the time. It was a whirlwind of a day, having to inform my employer, my family, those I had come in close contact with, deal with packing, briefings and all—I finally sat down in my designated room, facing the only person I had for these next 10 days: myself.

It is not an easy task transitioning from one lifestyle to another one, even if it be just temporarily. I had gone from being out 15 hours a day to staying in just one place…for what seemed like forever. I found myself feeling restless. I was constantly searching for distractions and trying to convince myself that this is not as bad as people make it seem. I ate my words in my first 48 hours. The deafening silence in my room late at night as I tried to sleep overwhelmed me with feelings of loneliness, self-doubt, and, quite honestly, fear. I was afraid of being alone and doubted that I could go the whole way before cracking under the pressure that isolation forces you to feel. Admittedly, I did crack and experienced a rollercoaster of emotions that I never knew I kept within me. The walls of the room felt confining and I couldn't help but wish that we (the isolated individuals) could've at least had 15 minutes to go out and get some fresh air, or take a walk around the building or by the beach. Something to get us out and feel the sun, the air, the wind…to feel something other than the feelings that overwhelm us when we're alone.

At the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc., otherwise known as NMPASI, we serve to protect the civil, legal, and human rights of individuals with disabilities. One of our programs specifically is catered toward the protection and advocacy for individuals with mental illness (PAIMI program). With mental health conditions increasing worldwide—about 13% globally according the World Health Organization—it is apparent that we need to continue to advocate for proper mental health services and resources for our people, especially those who have current existing mental health needs. When a person qualifies for our program, I've seen our advocates go above and beyond to ensure that services are being administered for our clients and if not, then the appropriate steps toward a resolution are taken. Every situation, every case, is dealt with in its own specific manner, as no one client who seeks our services is ever the same. Regardless, solutions are made, resolutions are found, and our clients' rights are clarified and protected. It is a sight to see and I'm grateful to be a part of that journey.

I admire all those who work in the field of mental health, whether it be as front-liners or behind the scenes folk; it is not an easy task carrying the load of another. But maybe that's just what we need more of. During my isolation period, despite the numerous "get well soon" messages and positive affirmations I received, I still had those lingering feelings creep up on me every so often and I let them take their course. However, I'm grateful to those who allowed me to share this insecure and sensitive part of myself with them. Thank you for helping me bear my load. It is important to hold on to those genuine acts of concern and meaningful interactions from others, whether it be big or small. It got me through and made me excited to seek my freedom from isolation and utilize it, perhaps more responsibly this time.

In short: stay positive, but test negative CNMI!

For more information about protection and advocacy services for individuals with mental illness, please contact NMPASI at our office numbers (670) 235-7273/4, text message (670) 287-0652, or visit our website at www.nmpasi.org.

Bombast, distance and distrust: Your guide to Ukraine talks

By ANDREAS KLUTH
Bloomberg Opinion

Andreas Kluth is a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion*. He was previously editor in chief of Handelsblatt Global and a writer for the Economist. He's the author of* Hannibal and Me.

The visuals on the split screen this week made a striking contrast. On one side, the leaders of Germany and the U.S. sat in front of the fireplace of the Oval Office, their body language cordial and relaxed, their messages coordinated. Facing the press later, Olaf Scholz, the German chancellor, switched spontaneously into redundant but frank English: "We will act together, and we will take all the necessary steps and all the necessary steps will be done by both of us together."

The other side of my TV screen also showed a meeting of two leaders—French President Emmanuel Macron and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The latter is the subject of all this crisis diplomacy as he masses troops around Ukraine.

Macron and Putin had already talked on the phone five times since December. Now they jaw-jawed for another six hours, facing each other across a long table in the sort of room you nowadays see only in the post-communist world—a space of bombast and cold lighting, designed to distance and intimidate people rather than connect them. The two men looked diminutive in it, their body language tense and shifty.

The three Western leaders in these two separate meetings are all working together to persuade Putin to lower the temperature. This is laudable. Macron subsequently visited Kyiv, and then met Scholz and Polish President Andrzej Duda in Berlin. Scholz in turn will visit Kyiv and then Moscow next week.

Jaw-jaw is better than war-war, as Winston Churchill allegedly said. And let nobody say today's diplomats aren't trying. What's harder for the public to divine is what's being said in these marathon meetings.

Is Putin negotiating in good faith? He denies that he intends to invade Ukraine. If he has no plans to do so, this diplomacy is all a show, staged for domestic propaganda to present him as the center of the world's attention and to, perhaps, win concessions from Europe on issues that have long been an annoyance. If instead he has already decided to attack, without telling anybody yet, it's also a show. Only if he's still weighing which way to go can diplomacy accomplish anything.

Questions also surround Macron. In the past, he's mused about "the brain death of NATO," while talking up "European autonomy," by which he apparently means a French-led European Union that acts independently of the U.S. He's also talked about offering Putin a nebulous sort of deal that might pry him out of the geopolitical embrace of China. A further consideration: He is running for re-election.

Before meeting Putin, Macron brainstormed about "Finlandization" as an option for Ukraine. That refers to Finland's deal with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, in which it stayed nominally independent in return for nonalignment with any bloc—but in reality ceded parts of its autonomy to Moscow.

After their meeting, Putin mentioned that it was "too early to speak about" some ideas Macron had floated, which could nonetheless create "a foundation for our further steps." Was that a reference to a Finlandization of Ukraine? If so, Macron would have breached Western unity and principle—the allies have so far insisted that no deals will be cut without the involvement and assent of smaller nations.

By contrast, Scholz cut a good figure. And he needed to. For weeks, he was criticized for trying to sit out the crisis. Germany was accused of being an unreliable ally, his own party—the Social Democrats—of appeasing Russia and being beholden to a Russo-German gas pipeline called Nord Stream 2. Scholz had to change that perception.

He did. Asked about Nord Stream 2, President Joe Biden simply stated that, in case of an invasion, "we will bring an end to it." Scholz didn't mention the pipeline by name but immediately added that "we are absolutely united," which left no doubt. If he doesn't want to get too specific too early, he explained once again, it's because it's better to keep Putin guessing just how tough the West's response will be. Scholz's Germany, he implied, will be plenty tough.

For now, therefore, the West remains united. Good. Macron and others must now reaffirm the same message.

As long as you're talking, you're not shooting one another, a former German foreign minister once said. That may have been naive—history shows that both can be done at once. But for now, diplomacy is the only thing we have. Thank heavens all the major powers—including Germany—are fully invested in that effort.

BIDEN

From Page 8

soul of America. Given the structural increases in partisan polarization, these pledges were always going to be difficult.

At the same time, he can cite some real successes. There haven't been any government shutdowns or real scares about the debt limit. He secured a bipartisan infrastructure bill. A huge postal reform bill passed the House with big bipartisan majorities last week. A bipartisan science-funding-and-China-competition bill still seems to be in the works.

The point is, when it comes to breaking promises, the stakes may be lower than the White House thinks. And as president of the United States, Biden is well within his rights to tell his science advisers that he hears what they are saying, but his judgment is that efforts to impose mask mandates are simply causing too much social division.

At his best, Biden is a politician's politician who knows when not to listen to the grim ideologues of the world. And a president famous for his love of ice cream understands that there's a difference between the science of personal health and the reality of daily life. Just as expecting the CDC to say ice cream is healthy would be unrealistic, pressuring it to say so would be inappropriate.

At the end of the day the presidency is a political office, held by politicians in order to make political choices. Joe Biden needs to level with the American people, as they say, and tell them what they need to hear: It's OK to have some ice cream.

DANGEROUS

From Page 8

vaccination status, The Washington Post reports.

Underlying these and other efforts around the country is a chilling premise: that one person's right to enter a school, office or other crowded place without being vaccinated overrides everyone else's right to be safe from potential exposure to a deadly disease. It doesn't—and until recently, it's not a premise that anyone outside society's fringes would have accepted. That this is becoming what passes for mainstream thought in Republican circles is terrifying and dangerous.

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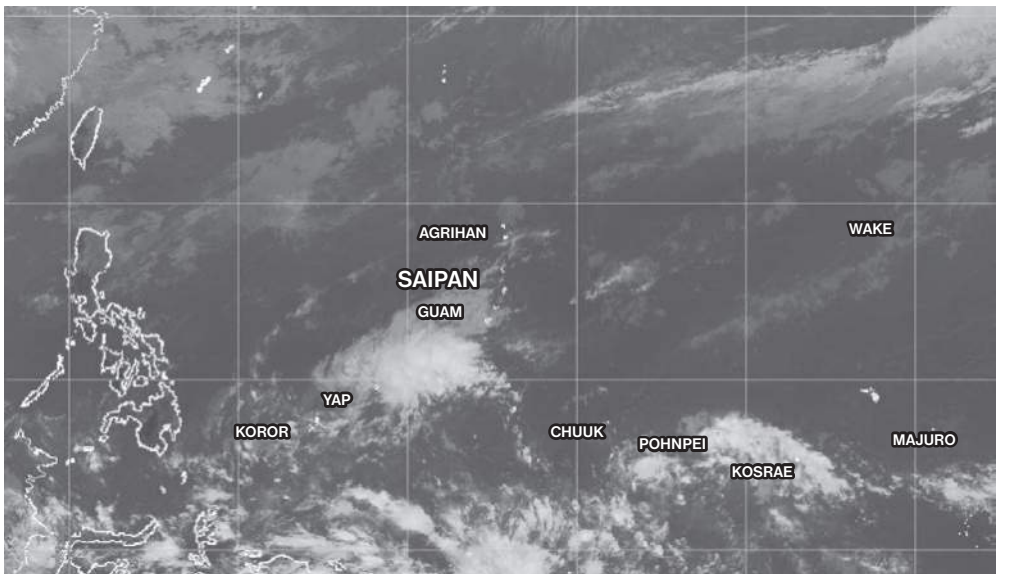
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
85° 74°	84° 76	85° 76°	86° 75°	86° 75°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:23 AM, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows scattered showers south of the Guam Waters, with very few showers within the Marianas Waters. Satellite does show substantial cloud cover though. The Ipan buoy reveals combined seas of 6 to 7 feet composed mainly of a northeast swell. The temporary USGS buoy shows a 4 foot north swell, which could raise the open ocean combined seas to between 7 and 8 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	AM Thunderstorms	29 / 24 °F
Palau	Thunderstorms	29 / 25 °F
Yap	Thunderstorms	29 / 25 °F
Chuuk	Mostly Cloudy	30 / 27 °F
Pohnpei	Scattered Thunderstorms	30 / 27 °F
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	30 / 27 °F
Majuro	Partly Cloudy/Wind	29 / 27 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	06:40 AM	18:21 PM
Friday	06:40 AM	18:21 PM
Saturday	06:39 AM	18:21 PM
Sunday	06:39 AM	18:22 PM
Monday	06:38 AM	18:22 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	07:03 PM	18:53 PM
Friday	-	07:43 PM	19:45 PM
Saturday	-	08:22 PM	20:37 PM
Sunday	-	09:00 PM	21:30 PM
Monday	-	09:39 PM	22:24 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Cloudy	24 / 17 °F
Beijing	Mostly Cloudy	0 / -8 °F
Hong Kong	Showers	18 / 16 °F
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	27 / 20 °F
London	Partly Cloudy	11 / 7 °F
Los Angeles	Sunny	22 / 7 °F
Manila	Partly Cloudy	33 / 24°F
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	23 / 13 °F
Miami	Mostly Sunny	26 / 23 °F
New York	Cloudy	16 / 11 °F
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	5 / 2 °F
Paris	Partly Cloudy	13 / 9 °F
Busan	Mostly Sunny	4 / -2 °F
Rome	Partly Cloudy	17 / 8 °F
Salem	PM Showers	25 / 10 °F
San Francisco	Sunny	17 / 7 °F
Seoul	Clear	0 / -12 °F
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	8 / 2 °F
Washington, DC	Cloudy	21 / 9 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
02:16 AM	Low Tide	-0.33
09:05 AM	High Tide	1.71
2:38 PM	Low Tide	0.90
7:44 PM	High Tide	1.75

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:30am	8:20am	1, 5
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 2)
TW9308	3:30PM	7:20PM	3, 7
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	3, 6

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	4, 7
UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 6, 7 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 2)
OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	3, 6
TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	3, 7

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

AP sources: White House seeks another $30B for COVID battle

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Biden administration is telling Congress that it needs an additional $30 billion to press ahead with the fight against COVID-19, officials said.

Two people familiar with the administration's plan confirmed key details on Tuesday: $17.9 billion for vaccines and treatments, $4.9 billion for testing, $3 billion to cover coronavirus care for uninsured people, and $3.7 billion to prepare for future variants. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss deliberations between the administration and lawmakers over the supplemental funding.

Separately, Republican Sen. Roy Blunt of Missouri told reporters he'd spoken with Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, and that "I think they are going to be proposing a $30 billion supplemental."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki addressed the need for more money without specifying the amount being sought.

"While we continue to have sufficient funds to respond to the current omicron surge in the coming weeks, our goal has always been to ensure that we are well prepared to stay ahead of the virus," she said.

AP

Cars wait in line at a drive-through COVID-19 testing site at Zoo Miami, Monday, Jan. 3, 2022, in Miami. The Biden administration is telling Congress that it needs an additional $30 billion to press ahead with th

According to the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, Congress has already approved $5.8 trillion to battle the pandemi c in a series of major bills spanning the Trump and Biden administrations. That's not counting actions by the Federal Reserve to help keep the economy going.

Psaki said most of the money from President Joe Biden's 2021 coronavirus relief bill has been spent or allocated, with 90% going for such priorities as vaccines, testing and support for schools.

It's unclear how the new request for supplemental funding will fare in Congress. Republicans would like to see more COVID-19 relief for businesses still struggling with the pandemic, while Democratic progressives want a major effort to vaccinate the rest of the world.

Blunt said senators had asked the administration how other COVID-19 dollars had been spent, "and frankly, in the categories they are asking for money, the other money has all been spent or committed."

Humanitarian groups, along with dozens of Democratic lawmakers, have been pressing the Biden White House and key committee leaders in Congress to provide billions of dollars for global vaccination efforts. They argue that will help fend off another coronavirus variant that could race around the world with deadly consequences.

While vaccine doses are starting to become more plentiful, the infrastructure to put shots into arms remains inadequate in many poorer countries. It's leading to vaccines being wasted, advocates say.

"Dose production is ramping up but there has not been a complementary investment in the health system to get those doses into arms," Rachel Hall, who heads U.S. government advocacy for the aid group CARE, said in a recent interview. "We are about to see a global mess because we have not been investing in the delivery system."

According to a CARE analysis, 32 out of 92 low-income countries that receive vaccine donations have used less than half the doses delivered. Among them are Nigeria, which has used 34% of doses delivered, Afghanistan, 46%, and Haiti, 39%.

Psaki acknowledged the problem at Tuesday's White House briefing. "A big part of our effort right now, and where we have seen challenges is turning vaccines into vaccinations," she said. The logistics involve "hyperlocal issues," she said.

US bird flu case puts chicken, turkey farms on high alert

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP)—Farms that raise turkeys and chickens for meat and eggs are on high alert and taking steps to increase biosecurity, fearing a repeat of a widespread bird flu outbreak in 2015 that killed 50 million birds across 15 states and cost the federal government nearly $1 billion.

The new fear is driven by the discovery announced Feb. 9 of the virus infecting a commercial turkey flock in Indiana. The 29,000 turkeys in the flock were killed to prevent the spread of the virus.

Indiana officials said Tuesday a second flock of 26,473 turkeys near the first infected farm is suspected to have the same virus. Testing is underway to confirm. The second location already is within a quarantine zone established for the first farm.

The USDA also has confirmed the presence of bird flu in a flock of commercial broiler chickens in Fulton County, Kentucky, and are awaiting results of a potential second case about 124 miles northeast in Webster County, Ketucky. A backyard flock of mixed species birds in northern Virginia also is positive for the virus. State officials quarantined areas and the birds at the new positively identified sites will be killed and removed.

The poultry industry and government officials say they have plans to more quickly stop the spread that were learned from 2015, but they're urging caution since the virus strain is potentially deadly to commercial poultry. Egg, turkey and chicken prices could rise and availability could drop if birds at enough farms were to be infected.

"It's definitely considered a period of high risk now that we have a confirmed case of highly pathogenic avian influenza in the commercial poultry industry," said Dr. Denise Heard, a poultry veterinarian and vice president of research for the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association. "I feel positive that we can tackle this situation better and I have my fingers crossed that this will be an isolated case, however, I would hope for the best and be prepared for the worst."

Health officials say no human cases of avian influenza viruses have been detected in the U.S. and the disease doesn't present an immediate public health concern. The virus can spread from infected birds to people but such infections are rare and haven't led to sustained outbreaks among humans.

Court fight looms as questions swirl over Trump's finances

NEW YORK (AP)—Questions about Donald Trump's business practices are piling up. Whether the former president is forced to answer any of them under oath could be decided in a matter of days.

New York's attorney general will go to court Thursday seeking to enforce a subpoena for Trump's testimony in a civil investigation she says uncovered evidence his company used "fraudulent or misleading" valuations of golf clubs, skyscrapers and other properties to get loans and tax benefits.

The hearing, before state Judge Arthur Engoron in Manhattan, is the next step in a legal battle that has unfolded in court papers over the last few weeks, including the revelation Monday that Trump's longtime accounting firm recently dumped him after warning that financial statements it prepared could not be trusted.

Trump

Trump's lawyers had argued those financial statements were truthful, and attempts to pick them apart over what they characterized as minor mistakes or omissions were politically motivated.

Trump issued a lengthy statement Tuesday night alleging that the accounting firm, Mazars USA LLP, cut ties with him because it had faced "vicious intimidation tactics" from authorities investigating him.

In a letter posted to the court docket as evidence, Mazars urged the Trump Organization on Feb. 9 to inform anyone who'd been given his Statement of Financial Condition, such as banks and insurers, that "those documents should not be relied upon."

The accounting firm said that while it hadn't found "material discrepancies" in reviewing the documents, it said the "totality of the circumstances" made it imprudent to use them going forward.

The Associated Press contacted several of Trump's lenders to see what, if any, effect the Mazars letter would have on Trump's existing financial arrangements, including the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of loans that investigators said were secured using the Statements of Financial Condition. They either didn't respond or declined comment, citing policies barring them from speaking about clients.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Regulators won't let Boeing certify new 787 jets for flight

Federal safety regulators say they will retain power to approve Boeing 787 airliners for flight rather than return that authority to the aircraft maker, which hasn't been able to deliver any new Dreamliner planes since last May because of production flaws. The Federal Aviation Administration said it told Boeing of its decision Tuesday. The FAA said that once deliveries of 787s resume, it will perform final inspections and retain power to clear each new plane until it is confident that Boeing's quality control and manufacturing "consistently produce 787s that meet FAA design standards." It also said Boeing must have a plan for handling planes that need reworking. "This will allow the agency to confirm the effectiveness of measures Boeing has undertaken to improve the 787 manufacturing process," the FAA said in a statement. ***(AP)***

Airbnb posts $55 million 4Q profit, revenue above 2019

Airbnb reported a $55 million profit for the fourth quarter, reversing a huge loss a year earlier, as its revenue soared above pre-pandemic levels. The San Francisco-based short-term-stay company said bookings surged in small and towns and rural areas, and improved even in urban areas, which were hit hardest earlier in the pandemic. Airbnb hosts were also able to raise prices. The average daily rate in late 2021 was $154, a 20% jump from a year earlier and 36% higher than the same quarter in 2019. The company cited strong demand for rentals in North America and an ongoing shift toward customers booking entire homes and vacation destinations where prices are usually higher. The company predicted that bookings and prices will rise again in the first quarter because of strong demand for travel. Together, the company said, those trends will boost first-quarter revenue to between $1.41 billion and $1.48 billion, well above the $1.23 billion forecast in a FactSet survey of analysts. ***(AP)***

Japan's Kirin to sell China joint venture to investment fund

TOKYO (AP)—Kirin is selling its China soft drinks joint venture to an investment fund, the Japanese beer and beverage maker said Wednesday. The move comes shortly after Kirin decided to pull out of a joint venture brewery in Myanmar. The sale to Plateau Consumer, a Chinese fund, for 115 billion yen ($994 million) covers Kirin's entire 40% stake in China Resources Kirin Beverages, Tokyo-based Kirin said in a statement. The joint venture, established in 2011, had been expanding its business in China, making bottled water and bottled tea, according to Kirin Holdings Co. Kirin said the move was part of its recent decision to review its investment portfolio, including foreign operations, under a management plan that runs through 2024.

Nation

Sandy Hook families settle for $73M with gun maker Remington

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP)—The families of nine victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting announced Tuesday they have agreed to a $73 million settlement of a lawsuit against the maker of the rifle used to kill 20 first graders and six educators in 2012.

The case was watched closely by gun control advocates, gun rights supporters and manufacturers, because of its potential to provide a roadmap for victims of other shootings to sue firearm makers.

The families and a survivor of the shooting sued Remington in 2015, saying the company should have never sold such a dangerous weapon to the public. They said their focus was on preventing future mass shootings by forcing gun companies to be more responsible with their products and how they market them.

At a news conference, some of the parents behind the lawsuit described a bittersweet victory.

"Nothing will bring Dylan back," said Nicole Hockley, whose 6-year-old son was killed in the shooting. "My hope for this lawsuit," she said, "is that by facing and finally being penalized for the impact of their work, gun companies along with the insurance and banking industries that enable them will be forced to make their practices safer than they've ever been, which will save lives and stop more shootings."

AP

An image of the advertising used for an AR-15-style rifle is displayed while attorney Josh Koskoff speaks during a news conference in Trumbull, Conn., Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022.

President Joe Biden called the settlement "historic," saying, "While this settlement does not erase the pain of that tragic day, it does begin the necessary work of holding gun manufacturers accountable for manufacturing weapons of war and irresponsibly marketing these firearms."

Gun rights groups said the settlement will have little effect on rifle sales and gun makers, who continue to be shielded from liability in most cases under federal law. But some experts said it may prompt insurers to pressure gun makers into making some changes.

"We might expect to see increased pressure from insurance companies for gun manufacturers to avoid the kind of either design choices or marketing practices that gave rise to this litigation," said Timothy D. Lytton, a law professor at Georgia State University.

The settlement is not the first between victims and a gun manufacturer. Families of eight victims of the Washington, D.C.-area snipers won a $2.5 million settlement in 2004, with $550,000 coming from Bushmaster Firearms Inc. and the rest from the gun dealer. But Lytton said the impact of the Sandy Hook settlement could be greater because it is so much higher.

The civil court case in Connecticut focused on how the firearm used by the Newtown shooter—a Bushmaster XM15-E2S rifle—was marketed, alleging it targeted younger, at-risk males in advertising and product placement in violent video games. In one of Remington's ads, it features the rifle against a plain backdrop and the phrase: "Consider Your Man Card Reissued."

As part of the settlement, Remington also agreed to allow the families to release numerous documents they obtained during the lawsuit including ones showing how it marketed the weapon, the families said. It's not clear when those documents will be released.

Remington had argued there was no evidence to establish that its marketing had anything to do with the shooting.

The company also had said the lawsuit should have been dismissed because of the federal law that gives broad immunity to the gun industry. The Connecticut Supreme Court ruled Remington could be sued under state law over how it marketed the rifle, under an exception to the federal law. The gun maker appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to hear the case.

ACROSS THE NATION

Officer in Floyd killing says his role was crowd control

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)—A former Minneapolis police officer charged in George Floyd's killing testified that he was relying on his fellow officers to care for Floyd's medical needs while he controlled traffic and onlookers as police tried to arrest the Black man. Tou Thao is one of three former officers charged in federal court with violating Floyd's constitutional rights when Officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for 9 1/2 minutes as the 46-year-old man was handcuffed, facedown on the street. Thao is scheduled to resume testifying Wednesday. He testified Tuesday that when he and Chauvin arrived, Officers J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane were struggling with Floyd. Thao said he took a position on the roadway to serve as "a human traffic cone" to keep cars away from the other officers. Kueng knelt on Floyd's back, while Lane held his legs.

Suspect dead, 2 deputies wounded after shootout in Texas

KATY, Texas (AP)—Two Texas sheriff deputies were shot and wounded Tuesday after exchanging gunfire with a suspect who was struck and killed, authorities said. Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez said the incident happened Tuesday night in northwest Harris County. Gonzalez said via Twitter that both officers were hospitalized with what appeared to be non-life-threatening injuries. According to Gonzalez, the deputies responded to the scene after receiving reports of shots being fired. When deputies arrived, Gonzalez said, the suspect shot at the deputies and the deputies returned fire. The deputies were hit and the suspect was declared dead at the scene.

Escapee captured, some Mississippi prison staff suspended

JACKSON, Miss. (AP)—A Mississippi inmate who escaped from prison over the weekend was captured Tuesday in a county where he had been convicted of murder, and about a dozen prison employees were suspended because the staff waited more than a day to tell the state Department of Corrections he was missing, department officials said. Michael Floyd Wilson, 51, was captured in coastal Harrison County, at least 130 miles (210 kilometers) from Central Mississippi Correctional Facility outside Jackson. Sheriff Troy Peterson said in a news release that officers caught Wilson in a car that had been reported stolen from a neighboring county. Corrections Commissioner Burl Cain said the car ran out of gas while Wilson was driving. Cain said Wilson is being moved to a different prison and "he'll have a hard time getting away from us there."

Driver found with bomb-making materials at California base

CORONADO, Calif. (AP)—The main entrance to North Island Naval Air Station near San Diego was closed for hours Tuesday after a motorist was found with bomb-making materials, a military spokesperson said. The vehicle approached the gate at about 9 a.m. and was stopped and searched at the request of Naval Criminal Investigative Service officials, Naval Base Coronado spokesperson Kevin Dixon told the San Diego Union-Tribune. The search turned up bomb-making materials that were not assembled into any kind of device, Dixon said. Officials detained the driver in for questioning, the Union-Tribune said. While the main entrance was closed, entry to the base was still available through two other gates. Shortly after 2 p.m., base officials posted a notice on Facebook that the main gates had reopened, shelter-in-place orders had been lifted and normal operations had resumed.

Entangled humpback whale cleared of marine debris off Maui

HONOLULU (AP)—A female humpback whale traveling with a male and a calf has been freed after it was found entangled in a line with a large bundle of marine debris attached. The whale was freed Monday while swimming in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary off Maui, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in a statement Tuesday. The calf and male weren't entangled. There was more than 500 feet (152 meters) of line that was wrapped tightly around the humpback's head. "Once freed, the mother and her calf went into resting behavior, with the calf tucking under the mother's chin. The successful response increased the survival chances for both the mother and her calf," NOAA said in a statement. The line was tangled with various kinds of marine debris that accumulates in the waters around Hawaii.

Girl, 9, dies after mistakenly shot by robbery victim

Earls

HOUSTON (AP)—A man who had just been robbed at gunpoint at an ATM in southeast Houston opened fire in an attempt to stop his attacker but instead shot a 9-year-old girl in a truck driving nearby, police said. The girl later died at a hospital.

Arlene Alvarez had been on life support before she died on Tuesday, her father Armando Alvarez told reporters.

Alvarez said Arlene was sitting in the backseat of his truck and was wearing headphones when the shooting started Monday evening.

"When we were getting shot at the first time, and I told them 'get down,' she was the only one who didn't get down. She didn't hear me," Alvarez said.

Tony Earls, 41, was charged Tuesday with aggravated assault, serious bodily injury, in the shooting, police announced. He was being held in the Harris County Jail on a $30,000 bond. Court records did not list an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Arlene's death was announced shortly after police said Earls had been charged. Dane Schiller, a spokesman for the Harris County District Attorney's Office, said prosecutors will look at possibly upgrading charges against Earls.

"Our hearts go out to the Alvarez family. We are going to review all the evidence, apply the law and determine what charges are appropriate," Schiller said.

Executive Assistant Police Chief Matt Slinkard on Monday night called the shooting "an unbelievably tragic event."

Arlene is the second 9-year-old girl to be shot in Houston within a week. Ashanti Grant remains hospitalized after being shot in the head during a road rage attack Feb. 8.

On Monday, Earls and his wife were at the ATM at around 9:45 p.m. when another man walked up to their vehicle and robbed them at gunpoint, Slinkard said.

As the suspect fled on foot, Earls got out of his vehicle and opened fire, including at a pickup truck he thought the robbery suspect had climbed into, police said.

But the truck carrying a family of five was not involved and had been "simply driving" down a street near the ATM, Slinkard said.

World

Honduras ex-President Hernández arrested at US request

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP)—Police arrested former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández at his home on Tuesday, following a request by the United States government for his extradition on drug trafficking and weapons charges.

The arrest came less than three weeks after Hernández left office and followed years of allegations by U.S. prosecutors of his alleged links to drug traffickers.

Hernández exited his home flanked by police, shackled at the wrists and ankles, and wearing a bulletproof jacket. He got into a police vehicle and was driven away. A police helicopter waiting nearby took flight and appeared to be escorting the caravan.

The Supreme Court of Justice had designated a judge Tuesday morning to handle the case and hours later the judge signed an order for Hernández's arrest, said court spokesman Melvin Duarte. The security ministry, which had Hernández's home surrounded since Monday evening, moved quickly to take him into custody.

Honduran Security Minister Ramón Sabillón, who was fired by Hernández as head of the National Police in 2014, said that Hernández had conspired "with cartels to traffic (drugs) and corrupt many public institutions, which led to social deterioration and undermined the application of justice in Honduras."

He said the main charges Hernández faces in the U.S. are drug trafficking, using weapons for drug trafficking and conspiracy to use weapons in drug trafficking.

U.S. prosecutors in New York had repeatedly implicated Hernández as a co-conspirator during his brother's 2019 drug trafficking trial, alleging that his political rise was fueled by drug profits.

His brother, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernández was sentenced to life in prison on drug and weapons charges in March 2021. At his sentencing Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Laroche characterized the crimes as "state-sponsored drug trafficking."

Nicole Navas, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Justice, declined comment about the U.S. extradition request.

Hernández released an audio recording via Twitter early Tuesday saying he was "ready and prepared to cooperate and go voluntarily ... to face this situation and defend myself" if an arrest order was issued.

AP

Former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, center in chains, is shown to the press at the Police Headquarters in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022.

WORLD BRIEFS

18 dead, fears of higher toll after rain deluges Brazil area

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)—At least 18 people died in mudslides and floods when torrential rains swept a mountainous region of Rio de Janeiro state, and there were fears the toll could rise as searchers check damaged areas Wednesday. The state fire department said late Tuesday that more than 180 soldiers were already working in the stricken Petropolis region, which saw hundreds of deaths from heavy rainfall in 2011. The department said the area got 25.8 centimeters (just over 10 inches) of rain within three hours Tuesday -- almost as much as during the previous 30 days combined. Footage posted on social media showed cars and houses being dragged away by landslides and water swirling through the city of Petropolis and neighboring districts.

Russia makes moves to ease Ukraine tensions; West skeptical

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia made two overtures to ease tensions around Ukraine—reporting a pullback of troops near its neighbor and welcoming talks with the West. But the United States and its allies said they needed evidence of the troop movements and that the threat of a Russian invasion still loomed. For the second day Tuesday, there were signs of hope that Europe might avoid war following weeks of escalating East-West tensions as Moscow massed around 150,000 troops on three sides of Ukraine and held massive military drills. Those moves led to dire warnings from Washington, London and other European capitals that Russia was preparing to roll into Ukraine. But the tenor changed this week. President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Russia does not want war and would rely on negotiations in its efforts to eliminate any chance that Ukraine could one day join NATO — his key demand in the crisis. At the same time, he did not commit to a full pullback, saying Russia's next moves in the standoff will depend on how the situation evolves.

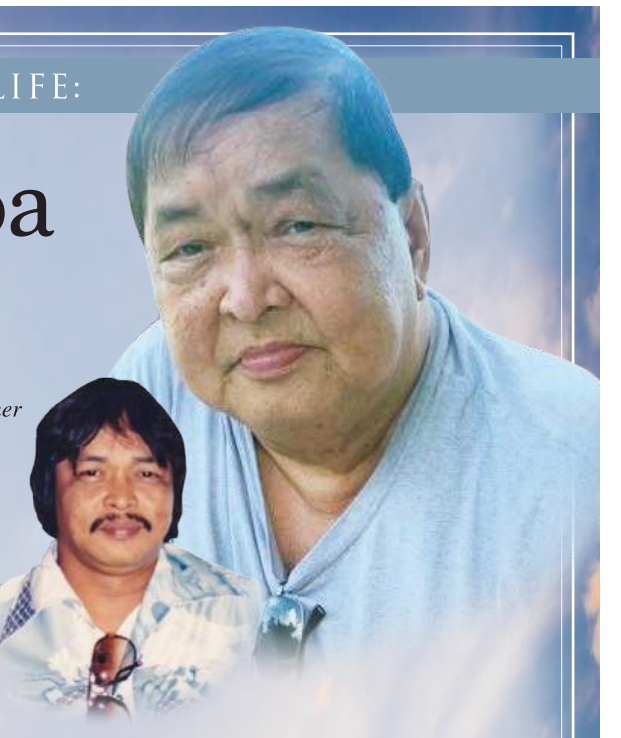
Virus surge begins to overwhelm Hong Kong's COVID measures

HONG KONG (AP)—Hong Kong's leader on Tuesday said a surge in coronavirus cases is overwhelming the city's emergency resources, but defended the strict measures that have been imposed. Chief Executive Carrie Lam said the Chinese central government was extending help to the city, which remains a nominally autonomous enclave. Despite its varying success, Hong Kong has stuck with China's zero-tolerance strategy requiring lockdowns, quarantines and mass testing for COVID-19. "So far, our measures to contain the spread of the disease remain legitimate and valid," Lam told reporters. "The problem we are facing is given the magnitude, the pace of and the severity of this fifth wave," she said, "It has outgrown our capacity."

IN CELEBRATION OF HIS NEW LIFE:

†Melchor Ulloa Maratita

Lovingly known as "Mel" or "Cho"
born on September 13, 1952, was called by our Heavenly Father
on February 01, 2022, at the age of 69 years old.



In his new life, he now joins his:
Wife: †Isabel Cabrera Sablan Maratita
Parents: †Pedro Songao and †Maria Atalig Ulloa Maratita
Parents In-Law: †Tomas Palacios and †Isabel Mendiola Cabrera Sablan
Daughter: †Doreen Elaine Sablan
Son: †Joesey Jay Sablan Maratita
Son In-Law: †Daniel Passi Punimata

Brothers, Sisters and In-Laws:
†Juan U. Maratita , †Edward U. & †Rosa C. Maratita, †Mametto U. & †Leonisa F. Maratita, †Jose U. Maratita, †Joaquin J. Castro, †Jose Q. Babauta, †Henry S. Sablan, †Soledad S. & †Francisco Basa, †Vicente S. & †Maria M. Sablan, †Faustina S. & †Fernando Benavente, †Ana S. & †Henry I. Indalecio, †Gregorio S. & †Victoria M. Sablan, †Jesus S. Sablan, †Manuel C. Sablan, †Rita S. Mettao, †Maria DLR. Gonzalez, †Maria S. & †Juan L. Ada, †Thomas C. & †Francisca M. Sablan, †Joaquin C. & †Grace C. Sablan, †Ramon C. Sablan, †Martin M. Taisacan, †Daniel T. Muna, †Jose T. Castro

His memories will forever live in the hearts of his children, grandchildren, and great granddaughter:

Erica Elizabeth Maratita & Tony Colon
Bethany Jane Maratita & Kwame Dawson
Eric Jay S. Maratita
Melchor Crispin M. Borja
Joseph John Jr. M. & Evelyn C. Borja (Zoe Jeyne)
Dion Julian M. Borja
Isabella Colon

Mel Patrick Sablan Maratita
Chanel Isabel S. Maratita & Joaquin M. Torres

Children of †Joesey Jay & Gina Tanya T. Duenas
Francis Giovanni Fidelino
Keona Kaylee C. Castro
Ricardo Jay C. Castro
Petra Doreen B. Castro
Yuliana Lorenza D. Maratita

Evita Marie Sablan Maratita & Joseph A. Borja Jr.
Annette Moka M. Punimata
Elaine Marie M. Borja

Evira Doreen Sablan Maratita

Robby Thomas Sablan Maratita & Katherine Tesch

Evana Belle Sablan Maratita & Jeffery Barney
Elijia Jamaal Barney
Rezion Jamel Barney
Jesiah Destin Maratita

Reared Children: Bethany Jane Maratita, Chanel Isabel S. Maratita, Dion Julian M. Borja, Jesiah Destin Maratita

Great Grandaughter: Zoe Jeyne Borja

Brothers, Sisters and Family:
Gloria U. Maratita and Family
Francisco R. & Beata (Vicky) M. Sablan and Family
Elisa M. Castro and Family
Ramon B. & Delia M. Camacho and Family
Romana U. Maratita & Jesus S. Cabrera and Family
Janet U. Maratita and Family
Juan U. & Tracy A. Maratita and Family
Vicente U. & Delia S. Maratita and Family
Rosalinda Ulloa & Donald C. Camacho and Family
Children of †Edward U. & †Rosa C. Maratita
Children of †Mametto U. & †Leonisa F. Maratita

Brothers & Sisters In-Laws and Family:
Rita DLG. Sablan and Family
Juana S. Muna and Family
Natividad C. Sablan & Ralph Demapan and Family
Matilde S. Taisacan and Family
Consolacion C. Sablan and Family
Ralph M. Mettao and Family
Alfred A. Gonzalez and Family
Pedro C. & Ignacia M. Sablan and Family
Margarita S. Castro and Family
Bernadita S. & Isidro T. Cabrera and Family
Children of †Soledad S. & †Francisco Basa
Children of †Vicente S. & †Maria M. Sablan
Children of †Faustina S. & †Fernando Benavente
Children of †Ana S. & †Henry Indalecio
Children of †Gregorio S. & †Victoria M. Sablan
Children of †Maria S. & †Juan L. Ada
Children of †Thomas C. & †Francisca M. Sablan
Children of †Joaquin C. & †Grace C. Sablan

He will also be missed by numerous nieces, nephews, god children, extended families and friends.

Daily mass of intentions is being offered at 6:00 pm, except Sunday at 7:00 am at San Antonio Church.

Funeral and Memorial Services will be held on Monday, February 21, 2022. His remains will be escorted from the Borja Funeral Home at 8:05am to San Antonio Church for responso, final viewing and last respects. Mass of a Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:30 am.

With heartfelt Si Yu'us Ma'ase and Thank You for your kindness, thoughts, and prayers,
The Children and Families of †MELCHOR ULLOA and †ISABEL SABLAN MARATITA

Environment

By IVA MAURIN
ivamaurin@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Miss NMI Earth

Elemental Queens joins forces for beach cleanup

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Miss Northern Mariana Islands Earth elemental queens join forces with community volunteer groups for a cleanup last Saturday, Feb. 12, at Tank Beach in Kagman. Photos courtesy of Miss Northern Marianas Earth.

Beauties with a purpose indeed!

2021 Miss Northern Mariana Islands Earth elemental queens Sue Ann Marie Huevos (Miss Air), Justine Rain Kirby (Miss Water), and Stephanie Borja (Miss Fire) went full on as environmental ambassadors on the morning of Feb. 12 for a cleanup at Tank Beach in Kagman, at the southeastern side of Saipan.

The three queens joined forces and hosted the cleanup that was participated in by about 30 volunteers, in partnership with Island Keepers CNMI, Division of Youth Services, and the Office of Rep. Richard Lizama.

Huevos told *Saipan Tribune* that they chose to do their cleanup at Tank Beach because "there was so much trash for a beautiful beach," adding that the beach cleanup is something that the elemental queens have been wanting to do for a long time now.

"Keeping the islands clean is important because this is our home," she said. "Our islands are tourist attractions and doing small things like these help make our home a better place. We should try our best to keep our island clean and pick up after ourselves and do it out of the goodness of our hearts because our island is a precious environment."

Huevos added that she also wants to inspire the youth to be environmentally-friendly and to love the islands "because this is our home and we can all make a difference together."

To Huevos, the islands can solve these garbage problems through the provision of more open trash bins, and if everyone would just pick up any trash they see and dispose of it properly.

With the Tank Beach cleanup a success, the community can expect more beach cleanups and environmental events from Miss NMI Earth, where all are encouraged to come out and participate.

"We Elemental Queens will definitely host more cleanups and bigger projects eventually. Despite the pandemic happening, the best we can all do is take care of ourselves and the land and ocean around us," Borja said. The 2021 Miss Fire hopes to have more people involved and engaged.

"As an environmental queen, I would like to extend a message of responsibility," Borja stressed. "Wherever you go, please take your trash with you and dispose of it properly. The little things matter and they could make a big difference. Not only is this affecting our island but the whole world, if we are not responsible."

We are all responsible

Water is life, and so is the ocean an intrinsic part of living in the Marianas.

"Not only do our beaches…attract tourists, but [they are also] important to our indigenous people who have used [the sea] as a source of food for hundreds of years," Kirby told *Saipan Tribune*.

IVA MAURIN

Marine debris have been piling up at the Old Man by the Sea. Volunteer group Island Keepers CNMI is calling on those who would want to volunteer to help clean the beach. File photo shows a volunteer picking up trash at Old Man by the Sea in July 2020.

The 2021 Miss Water highlighted the importance of being aware of the problems hounding CNMI waters, in particular, plastic pollution, and how cleanups all over the islands facilitate discussions of the issue, even between friends and families, which eventually help modify behavior.

"It brings our people face-to-face with the reality of plastic pollution. Many people are unlikely to change their behavior until they understand the extent of plastic pollution and see the impact it has on the environment," she said.

Kirby also noted that cleanup events often attract attention, and is a great way to start up a conversation with people who stop by, on the benefits of switching to non-single use plastic alternatives (such as reusable shopping bags).

"We can't pinpoint an instant solution to this critical issue we are facing but as young kids with big dreams and a big future, we have the power to change the world, and we are starting with what's most important, our people and our home," she said. "By seeing the effectiveness of improving the surrounding environment, it can encourage more people to get involved, especially if they feel that they are making a difference."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Help needed to save the Old Man by the Sea

Help needed by the Old Man

Like Tank Beach, there's another precious beach that is in dire need of help—the Old Man by the Sea.

Last Saturday, volunteer group Island Keepers CNMI hiked down to the Old Man to check on a post from community member Karie Comstock, who, through photos, showed the sad state of the beach that is overwhelmingly littered with garbage.

"It was worse than we thought. …It was a shock like being hit in the head," volunteer Noriko Akari Baidya shared. They were able to remove some garbage from the beach, but clearly, more people are needed to help with the task.

There is a shocking amount of marine debris—discarded water bottles, wrappers, containers, cans, shoes, pipes, and micro-plastics, which may have come from off-island, all needing to be picked up and carried to the roadside, then hauled to the landfill in Marpi.

Compared to the west side of Saipan, where trash is usually land-based and come from residents, the east side (back side of the island) is where marine debris from around the world gets washed up.

Volunteers have also been going to the beach to help pick up the marine debris year after year.

"This project requires the power of many people," Baidya added.

In line with this, the group has scheduled another cleanup for Old Man by the Sea, tentatively set on a Sunday, with the Miss Northern Marianas Earth participating and the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality providing the trash trailer and hauling the trash to the landfill post-cleanup.

Hikers, joggers, and sports teams are encouraged to join, especially given the lengthy trail that it takes to get to and from the Old Man by the Sea. To volunteer and to join in the discussions for the cleanup, reach out to the Island Keepers CNMI on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/groups/874134049895799).

Life & Style

Prince Andrew to settle sex abuse case, donate to charity

NEW YORK (AP)—Britain's Prince Andrew, accused in a lawsuit of sexually abusing a 17-year-old girl supplied to him by financier Jeffrey Epstein, has agreed to settle by making a substantial donation to his accuser's charity and declaring he never meant to malign her character, a court filing revealed Tuesday.

The deal avoids a trial that would have brought further embarrassment to the monarchy. Besides the undisclosed donation to Virginia Giuffre's charity, it says Andrew acknowledges she has suffered as an abuse victim. It did not specify whether Giuffre would personally receive money as part of the settlement.

Prince Andrew

Attorney David Boies, representing Giuffre, told the New York federal judge overseeing the case in a letter that a settlement in principle had been reached and lawyers on both sides would request a dismissal of the lawsuit within a month.

Andrew's lawyer did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

Judge Lewis A. Kaplan said he would suspend the case until March 17, when he might set a trial date if the lawyers don't ask for a dismissal by then.

Giuffre, 38, sued Andrew in August. The American accused the British royal of sexually abusing her while she traveled with Epstein.

Andrew strenuously denied Giuffre's allegations and attempted to get the lawsuit tossed earlier this year.

Attached to the letter from Boies was a statement that read: "Virginia Giuffre and Prince Andrew have reached an out of court settlement. The parties will file a stipulated dismissal upon Ms. Giuffre's receipt of the settlement (the sum of which is not being disclosed)."

"Prince Andrew intends to make a substantial donation to Ms. Giuffre's charity in support of victims' rights. Prince Andrew has never intended to malign Ms. Giuffre's character, and he accepts that she has suffered both as an established victim of abuse and as a result of unfair public attacks."

According to the statement, Prince Andrew acknowledged that Epstein trafficked "countless young girls" over many years and said the prince "regrets his association with Epstein, and commends the bravery of Ms. Giuffre and other survivors in standing up for themselves and others."

He also pledged to support the victims of sex trafficking as part of demonstrating his regret.

Alec Baldwin sued by family of cinematographer killed on set

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The family of a cinematographer shot and killed on the set of the film "Rust" sued Alec Baldwin and the movie's producers Tuesday alleging their "callous" disregard in the face of safety complaints led directly to her death.

At a news conference announcing the lawsuit, attorneys for the husband and 9-year-old son of Halyna Hutchins said that Baldwin refused training for the type of "cross-draw" he was performing when he fired the shot that killed her.

Baldwin's attorney responded that any claim the actor was reckless is "entirely false."

The suit filed in New Mexico's Santa Fe County in the name of Matthew and Andros Hutchins shows a text message exchange between a camera operator and a producer in which a complaint over gun safety was met with what the suit calls "callous sarcasm."

Baldwin

The operator, Lane Luper, texted unit production manager Katherine Walters saying: "We've now had 3 accidental discharges. This is super unsafe."

Walters responds: "Accidental discharge on the firearm? Awesome. Sounds good."

At least four other lawsuits have been filed over the shooting, but this is the first directly tied to one of the two people shot.

The defendants' "reckless conduct and cost-cutting measures led to the death of Halyna Hutchins," attorney Brian Panish said.

Had proper protocols been followed, the suit says, "Halyna Hutchins would be alive and well, hugging her husband and 9-year-old son. "

Baldwin, who was also a producer on the film, was pointing a gun at Hutchins inside a small church during the setup for the filming of a scene for the Western in New Mexico on Oct. 21 when it went off, killing Hutchins and wounding the director, Joel Souza. The attorneys showed an animated recreation of the shooting at the news conference.

Baldwin has said he was pointing the gun at Hutchins at her instruction and it went off without him pulling the trigger.

The suit says industry standards call for using a rubber or similar prop gun during the setup, and there was no call for a real gun.

It also says that both Baldwin and assistant director David Halls, who handed him the gun, should have checked the revolver for live bullets.

Jury rejects Sarah Palin's lawsuit against New York Times

NEW YORK (AP)—Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin lost her libel lawsuit against The New York Times on Tuesday when a jury rejected her claim that the newspaper maliciously damaged her reputation by erroneously linking her campaign rhetoric to a mass shooting.

A judge had already declared that if the jury sided with Palin, he would set aside its verdict on the grounds that she hadn't proved the paper acted maliciously, something required in libel suits involving public figures.

Palin

Asked about the verdict as she left the Manhattan courthouse, Palin said, "Of course we're disappointed," adding she hoped there would be an appeal. She also praised her two lawyers.

"There were three of us versus the monstrous team of The New York Times, and we did well," she said. "Doing all they can to make sure the little guy has a voice, the underdog can have their say."

In a statement, the Times called the verdict a "reaffirmation of a fundamental tenet of American law: public figures should not be permitted to use libel suits to punish or intimidate news organizations that make, acknowledge and swiftly correct unintentional errors."

Super Bxowl has 101 million TV viewers, up from 2021

NEW YORK (AP)—The Super Bowl rebounded to draw an estimated 101.1 million television viewers who saw the Los Angeles Rams beat the Cincinnati Bengals on a late-game drive, proving the dominance of football as an audience magnet.

The audience on NBC and Telemundo was a 6% increase over the 95.2 million TV viewers who saw the Tampa Bay Bucs crowned as champions in 2021, the Nielsen company said on Tuesday.

The ratings improvement for what is traditionally the most-watched event of the year was no surprise, given the run of terrific playoff games leading up to it. Viewership for the NFL's divisional round was up 20% over last year, and the conference championships were up 10%, Nielsen said.

Regina Hall, Amy Schumer, Wanda Sykes to host Oscars

LOS ANGELES (AP)—After three years without a host, the Oscars are making up for lost time with three hosts for this year's awards: Amy Schumer, Regina Hall and Wanda Sykes are set to host the 94th Academy Awards, producer Will Packer said Tuesday.

"This year's show is all about uniting movie lovers," Packer said in a statement. "It's apropos that we've lined up three of the most dynamic, hilarious women with very different comedic styles."

Packer has worked with Hall several times as the producer of films like "Girls Trip," "Think Like a Man" and "Little."

The show is hoping to rebound from the dismal viewership of last year's broadcast, which was both an all-time low and the norm for pandemic-era awards shows. In addition to bringing back starry hosts and bumping the best picture nominees to a set ten, the Academy is also hoping to spike interest through social media voting for a "fan favorite" movie that will be announced during the show, as well as a chance to win a trip to Los Angeles for the ceremony.

Cousin desperate to help woman in abusive romance

DEAR ABBY: I have always been extremely close to my cousins; we even refer to ourselves as sisters. The problem I'm having is with the boyfriend of one of them. They have been dating for almost 10 years.

For the first few years we were all close, and I enjoyed spending time with them. The past three years, however, have been heartbreaking. He's rude to her and her mother and belittles and ridicules everything she says and does. We all walk on eggshells when he's around, not to mention he constantly stares at our chests.

They recently moved hours away for his job. I feel he has purposely isolated her from all of us, and is mentally and emotionally abusing her. She used to want to get married and have a family with him, but now she is calling me selfish for being pregnant. He's dragging her down and has bought himself more time by getting her a dog.

Even if they did get engaged, I'd feel sad she's spending her life with this man. If he treats her like this in front of all of us, what is he doing behind closed doors? My cousin is very prideful and shuts down any criticism. How can I explain to her that I'm worried about her without risking our relationship?

SCARED FOR HER IN THE EAST

DEAR SCARED: Tell your cousin you love her dearly and will be saying this only once, so you want her to remember it. Then repeat to her what you have written to me. Explain that abusers erode the self-esteem of their "love object" through constant criticizing and belittling. Say you realize she has invested 10 years of her life in that relationship, but if she ever has doubts or changes her mind about living away from the family, you will be there for her. Then give her the contact information of the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-7233; thehotline.org) if there have been any instances in which he has hit or threatened her —or the dog—when he's angry.

***

DEAR ABBY: My husband will not do things unless I "remind" him. He has a medical issue and experiences painful symptoms if he forgets to take the medication his doctor prescribed. He'll then have a flare-up, take his medicine and not take it again until another flare-up happens.

Also, he'll need to have an important doctor's appointment for a procedure and he won't even think about making the call to schedule it. I used to remind him about all these things but, frankly, I'm not his mother. I'm his wife. Please help.

NOT HIS MOTHER

DEAR NOT HIS MOTHER: Being a loving spouse requires us to fill varying roles in the life partnership. Not only are we lovers, best friends and sometimes nurses, but we must sometimes act as "parents."

It's hard to believe someone who has a chronic condition that brings painful flare-ups would forget to take a medication that would avert them, which makes me wonder about your husband's mentation. Doctor visits can sometimes be uncomfortable, which may be why he hesitates to schedule them.

If you love him, please shoulder that responsibility as you would want him to do if the situation were reversed.

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

THIS SNOWMAN DOESN'T LOOK ESPECIALLY AVANT-GARDE.
ACTUALLY IT'S VERY AVANT-GARDE.
THIS IS MY NEW ART MOVEMENT, "NEO-REGIONALISM." I'M APPEALING TO POPULAR NOSTALGIA FOR THE SIMPLE VALUES OF RURAL AMERICA 50 YEARS AGO.
I FIGURE THE PUBLIC WILL EAT THIS UP AND I'LL MAKE A FORTUNE.
SO HOW IS THIS AVANT-GARDE?
IT'S SECRETLY IRONIC.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

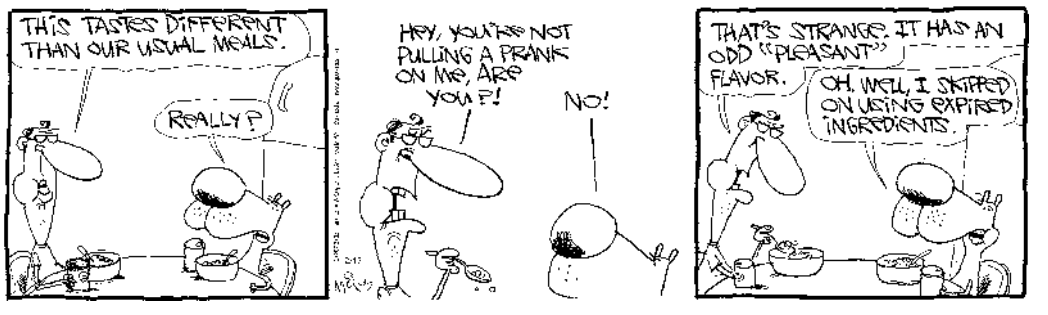
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

YOU WANT THE SAUCER OR THE GOOD SLED?
THE GOOD ONE. DUH. THAT'S WHY I GRABBED IT.
THE SAUCER JUST SINKS INTO THE SNOW LIKE A DUD.
LOUSY SAUCER SLED.
HAVE FUN! MAYBE YOU CAN JUST ROLL DOWN THE HILL!

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


THIS TASTES DIFFERENT THAN OUR USUAL MEALS.
REALLY?
HEY, YOU'RE NOT PULLING A PRANK ON ME, ARE YOU?!
NO!
THAT'S STRANGE. IT HAS AN ODD "PLEASANT" FLAVOR.
OH, WELL, I SKIPPED ON USING EXPIRED INGREDIENTS.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

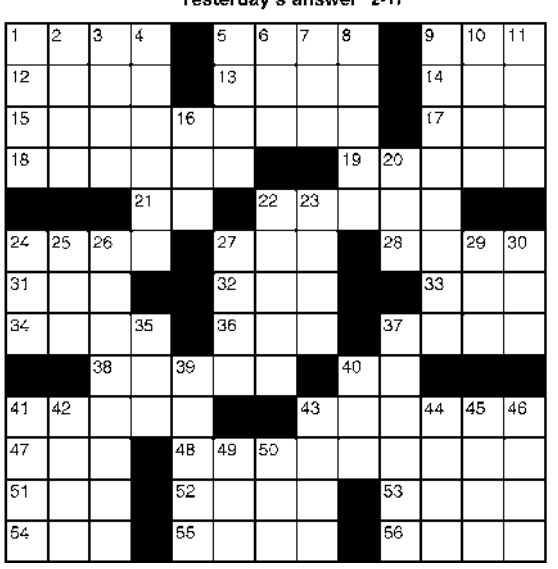
ACROSS
1 Corn castoffs
5 Duel tool
9 Buddy
12 In — (miffed)
13 Sandwich shop
14 Slangy suffix
15 Was logically sound
17 Arg. neighbor
18 Football team
19 "To recap ..."
21 UFO pilot
22 Bucking horse
24 Church song
27 Cato's 502
28 "— hiring!" (new store sign)
31 French pronoun
32 Heart chart (Abbr.)
33 Convent dweller
34 Tousle
36 Meadow
37 Obey
38 Sequence
40 Opposite of nyet
41 Bas-relief medium
43 Big cheeses
47 Green prefix
48 Illusionist's offering
51 Capote nickname
52 Austen heroine
53 Moth variety
54 Dine
55 Relaxing resorts
56 Online crafts site

DOWN
1 Arrived
2 Milky gem
3 Eliot's "Adam —"
4 Director Spielberg
5 Idyllic place
6 Corral
7 Golfer Ernie
8 "Old MacDonald" refrain
9 Frenzied gathering
10 Baseball's Moises
11 Tranquil
16 Filming site
20 SSE's opposite
22 Harley rider
23 Latvia's capital
24 "Let me think ..."
25 One of us
26 Sushi bar bowlful
27 Take out of context?
29 Wish undone
30 Conclusion
35 Fourth-yr. students
37 Pester
39 Igloo shapes
40 Elmer, to Bugs
41 Understands
42 Beige
43 Prejudice
44 Close
45 Billions of years
46 Vacillate
49 Music booster
50 "Today" rival, briefly

Solution time: 24 mins.

E	M	M	A	■	J	O	B	■	G	A	S	
S	A	A	B	■	A	R	A	■	C	U	S	T
P	U	S	H	O	V	E	R	■	A	S	T	A
N	I	K	O	_	A	■	H	E	D	H	C	I
■	■	■	R	A	M	■	E	F	I	C	■	■
P	E	P	■	F	A	M	■	A	N	A	I	S
A	R	U	N	■	N	B	C	■	G	R	I	P
O	A	S	E	S	■	A	R	B	■	T	I	A
■	■	H	A	H	A	■	I	L	L	■	■	■
D	E	P	T	H	S	■	M	A	I	T	A	I
A	R	I	E	■	P	U	S	H	B	A	C	K
D	O	N	S	■	E	N	C	■	Y	O	R	E
A	S	S	T	■	N	O	N	■	A	S	E	A

Yesterday's answer 2-17



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Ed Sheeran, 31; Joseph Gordon-Levitt, 41; Billie Joe Armstrong, 50; Denise Richards, 51.

Happy Birthday: Stay on target. Focus on what you want to achieve. Express your desires, and explore your options. Take the initiative and change whatever isn't working for you into something that promotes enthusiasm and success. Put your heart, soul and intelligence into what you want. It's up to you to strive for peace and happiness. Live life your way. Your numbers are 6, 17, 22, 24, 31, 35, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Focus on what must get done. Don't let others' changes or uncertainty upset you or cause you to second-guess what you are doing. Stick to your game plan, and make the most of your day. Remain calm and make healthy decisions. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Do as you please, even if you face opposition. Satisfy your needs, and you'll feel empowered. An unusual connection with someone will surface if you take the road less traveled. Listen and learn, but in the end, do things your way. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Take a step back if someone interferes. Reset your plans and start over. Control your emotions and put on a happy face, regardless of what others do. Set your sights on your pursuit and don't stop until you reach your destination. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Tidy up around the house, and you'll feel more at home and relaxed in your environment. Decluttering your space will help you sort through what you can donate or sell. Keeping the necessities and knowing where they are will ease stress. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Don't take a gamble. Stick to what you are familiar with, and avoid the nuances that surface with uncertainty. Don't feel the need to step into the spotlight unless you are prepared to take on more responsibility. For now, observe and plan. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Do whatever it takes to implement change. Move into high gear, and pull in those you know you can count on to do a good job. An unusual suggestion will help you reach your goal. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Put an end to a situation that isn't healthy or in your best interest. Question what you are doing and what you want to do next. Don't take your eyes off the goal you want to achieve. Discipline is required. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Be open to other people's opinions, but don't give up your beliefs. Take what you hear, learn and experience, and formulate a unique plan. Once you pick a path, others will follow. Personal growth is within reach. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Be careful who you trust and believe. Verify facts, and be willing to do the work yourself to avoid unnecessary expenses and putting yourself in a vulnerable position. Use your intellect, and avoid people and situations that are emotionally draining. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Take on whatever comes your way with enthusiasm. Don't wait for others to act; be the first to strike, and make your position clear to anyone who wants to mess with your plans. Follow your heart, and seize the moment. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Nurture relationships. Recognize what others want and need from you, and it will be easier to get what you want in return. Don't feel pressured to agree with everything others say. Look for common interests, and you'll find a way to relate. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Come up with a plan and follow through. The saying "Go big or go home" will encourage you to outdo anyone or anything that wants to compete. You don't have to change anything; be yourself and do your best. Romance is encouraged. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are friendly, accommodating and unusual. You are trendy and energetic.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

6			5	9			
					6		4
5	4				1		
6		2		5			
8							2
		6		3			7
	5				9	2	
2	3						
		8	7			1	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 2/17

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

8	7	3	9	1	2	4	5	6
5	1	9	6	4	3	2	7	8
4	6	2	7	8	5	9	1	3
3	4	8	2	7	6	1	9	5
9	2	7	3	5	1	8	6	4
1	5	6	8	9	4	3	2	7
7	3	1	4	6	9	5	8	2
6	9	4	5	2	8	7	3	1
2	8	5	1	3	7	6	4	9

Difficulty Level ★★★

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

FLUGELHORNS **Solution: 10 letters**

S	E	N	U	T	N	E	M	U	R	T	S	N	I	H
P	C	A	S	I	N	G	S	S	A	R	B	A	G	S
A	T	R	I	G	G	E	R	V	A	L	V	E	A	U
C	I	P	D	H	C	T	I	P	W	E	M	C	U	L
F	O	D	R	E	O	U	U	T	O	N	E	N	G	T
I	E	M	N	O	R	T	R	H	L	O	Y	A	E	K
N	L	R	P	U	F	E	E	V	L	M	R	N	D	N
G	G	P	E	O	O	E	M	P	E	I	A	O	E	A
E	U	M	B	V	S	S	S	M	M	Ⓨ	T	S	R	H
R	B	K	U	A	E	E	I	S	Ⓐ	U	O	E	E	S
D	E	U	O	T	C	L	R	Ⓛ	I	H	R	R	U	M
D	N	C	T	O	E	H	Ⓟ	I	V	O	D	T	Q	O
L	E	I	N	T	H	I	R	D	B	E	N	N	C	O
O	N	D	W	R	E	N	A	E	L	C	R	A	A	T
G	T	I	M	B	R	E	P	I	P	D	A	E	L	H

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Bach, Bags, Bore, Brass, Bugle, Caps, Casings, Cleaner, Composer, Curve, Finger, First, Gauge, Gold, Hammered, Hand, Hook, Instrument, Lacquered, Lead Pipe, Lever, Lush, Mellow, Mone:, Mute, Pitch, Play, Professional, Resonance, Rotary, Second, Setting, Shank, Silver, Slide, Smooth, Sound, Third, Timbre, Tone, Trigger, Trumpet, Tube, Tune, Valve, Wind

Yesterday's Answer: Sensors

The NEW **Treasuries 46 and 47** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Suns beat Clippers, adding on to NBA-best 47-10 record

PHOENIX (AP)—In the span of about two minutes late in the fourth quarter, Chris Paul hit a 3-pointer, found Devin Booker for a picturesque alley-oop slam and made a difficult short jumper off the glass to push the Phoenix Suns up by four points.

Just another ho-hum finish in winning time for arguably the NBA's best backcourt.

Booker scored a game-high 26 points, Paul added 17 points and 14 assists, and the All-Star duo led the Suns to another victory by beating the Los Angeles Clippers 103-96 on Tuesday night. "We turn it on," Booker said. "I don't want to make it sound like it's an on/off switch like we're not trying the rest of the game, but we've been in those situations, and we understand how much those little plays and 50/50 balls matter."

The Suns have won six straight games and 17 of their past 18 dating back to Jan. 11. They also pushed their NBA-best record to 47-10 with one game remaining before the All-Star break. Mikal Bridges added 19 points and nine rebounds — including a crucial 3-pointer in the final minute — while Deandre Ayton had 12 points and 12 rebounds.

AP

Phoenix Suns guard Devin Booker (1) shoots past Los Angeles Clippers forward Nicolas Batum during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022, in Phoenix.

Hawks 124, Cavaliers 116

In Atlanta, Trae Young scored 41 points, Danilo Gallinari added 25 and Atlanta held off Cleveland.

Cleveland, third in the Eastern Conference, lost consecutive games for the first time since Dec. 31. The Hawks are 10th in the East and had dropped two straight and five of seven.

Darius Garland finished with 30 points, Evan Mobley had 21 points and Kevin Love 20 for the Cavaliers, who had held opponents under 100 points 23 times this season but struggled to contain Young's frantic pace.

The Cavaliers called timeout after Young dished to De'Andre Hunter for a straightaway 3 that made it 113-104 with 4:50 to go. Young missed a layup and Garland drove to assist on Jarrett Allen's hook shot that trimmed the lead to 113-109.

But a couple of possessions later, Young assisted on Kevin Huerter's corner 3 that made it 120-111 and drove the lane for a runner that put the Hawks up 122-114 with 1:27 remaining.

Mavericks 107, Heat 99

In Miami, Luka Doncic scored 21 points and the Dallas Mavericks beat Miami.

Jalen Brunson and Maxi Kleber each finished with 19 points and Dorian Finney Smith had 14 points for the Mavericks, who have won 17 of 23 since Jan. 1 and snapped Miami's five-game winning streak.

Recently acquired Davis Bertans had 12 points for Dallas in his debut. Bertans and Spencer Dinwiddie were acquired from Washington for Kristaps Porzingis on Feb. 12. Dinwiddie finished with four points.

Miami's Jimmy Butler scored a game-high 29 points and Bam Adebayo finished with 21 for the Heat, which is now tied for the Eastern Conference lead with Chicago.

Bucks 128, Pacers 119

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo scored a season-high 50 points, two off his career best, and pulled down 14 rebounds to lead Milwaukee past Indiana.

The Bucks swept the four-game season series from the Pacers and have won eight straight against their Central Division foe.

Antetokounmpo, who didn't play in Milwaukee's loss to Portland on Monday night because of a sore left ankle, showed no ill effects as he racked up 12 first-quarter points that included a pair of thunderous dunks and a 3-pointer.

Antetokounmpo set a career high with his seventh 40-point game of the season and scored 50 for the first time since the memorable title-clinching game in the NBA Finals last season, which gave the Bucks their first championship in 50 years.

Milwaukee bounced back after consecutive double-digit losses to hand Indiana its seventh consecutive defeat. Buddy Hield scored a season-high 36 points and Tyrese Haliburton had 17 points and eight assists for Indiana.

Grizzlies 121, Pelicans 109

In New Orleans, Tyus Jones scored a career-high 27 points to go with eight assists while filling in for All-Star Ja Morant, and Memphis beat New Orleans for its sixth straight victory and ninth in 10 games.

Jaren Jackson added 23 points and ex-Pelican Steven Adams had 14 points and 13 rebounds for Memphis, which led for nearly the entire game and by double digits for more than half of it.

Morant sat out with left ankle soreness stemming from the Grizzlies' victory at Charlotte last Saturday night.

While Morant averages 26.4 points per game, the Grizzlies have usually played well without him. They are now 12-2 in games he's missed. Against New Orleans, Memphis had six players score 11 or more, including Brandon Clarke with 18 points.

CJ McCollum had 30 points to lead New Orleans, which fell to 1-3 since trading for the Portland star guard. Jonas Valanciunas scored 19 points and Brandon Ingram added 18 points for the Pelicans.

Celtics 135, 76ers 87

In Philadelphia, Jaylen Brown scored 26 of his 29 points in the first half and Boston won its ninth in a row by dominating Philadelphia.

Jayson Tatum added 28 points, 12 rebounds and six assists for the Celtics, who have closed ground in the Eastern Conference with their stellar play of late. Boston entered sixth in the East, 4½ games back of first-place Miami. They have won 11 of 12.

The margin of victory was the largest by the Celtics over Philadelphia in a rivalry that has been played 457 times. Boston's previous biggest win was a 124-87 drubbing of Philadelphia on Dec. 20, 1987.

Joel Embiid had 19 points and nine rebounds for the 76ers. The NBA's leading scorer entering the contest averaging 29.5 points. Embiid had his string of games with at least 25 points end at 31 in a row.

James Harden made his first appearance in Philadelphia — but in street clothes. The recently acquired star continues to recover from a hamstring injury. Harden is expected to make his 76ers debut on Feb. 25 at Minnesota.

Timberwolves 126, Hornets 120, OT

In Minneapolis, Karl-Anthony Towns had 39 points and 15 rebounds, D'Angelo Russell added 18 points and 11 assists, and Minnesota came back to beat Charlotte in overtime.

Minnesota came back from a 13-point deficit in the fourth, but Miles Bridges tied the game for Charlotte with a 3-pointer and free throw in the final minute. Russell's last-second 3 was off the mark, forcing overtime. Towns scored seven points to lead the way in overtime.

Bridges had 28 points and 13 rebounds for the Hornets, who have lost eight of nine. LaMelo Ball scored 22 before fouling out in overtime, while Terry Rozier added 25 points and Mason Plumlee finished with 14 points and 17 rebounds.

Minnesota was without their energetic young swingman, Anthony Edwards, for the second half and overtime. He limped off the court with a right ankle sprain in the final seconds of first half.

Slowed by hamstring, Harden to make Sixers debut Feb. 25

CAMDEN, N.J. (AP)—James Harden has an MVP and several scoring titles on his mantle — and now he's ready to add a championship trophy.

Harden was introduced by the Philadelphia 76ers on Tuesday following last week's blockbuster trade that sent disgruntled guard Ben Simmons to the Brooklyn Nets.

Asked if his new team can win the NBA title, Harden put up the shot all Sixers fans wanted to hear.

"Hell yeah," he deadpanned. "My job is to help the team win a championship."

In 12 seasons with Oklahoma City, Houston and Brooklyn, the 32-year-old Harden has made 10 All-Star teams, won the 2018 MVP and earned three scoring titles. He wants a title, and thinks it can happen in Philly.

"I just knew for a very long time this was a perfect fit," he said. "It's an opportunity of a lifetime."

Harden missed his final four games with the Nets due to a hamstring injury and the first two since joining the 76ers. He practiced on Monday and Tuesday at the team's training center in Camden, New Jersey, and will sit out Tuesday night's home game against Boston and Thursday's matchup at Milwaukee.

Harden is set to make his 76ers debut on Feb. 25 at Minnesota.

"After the (All-Star) break, we'll get things going," he said.

Harden is excited to pair with MVP front-runner Joel Embiid, who is leading the NBA in scoring at 29.5 points per game.

"I think we complete each other," said Harden, who is leading the league in assists at 10.2. "The whole world knows how great Joel has been playing. His presence alone is unbelievable. I feel like I'm the same way as far as making my teammates better, and we have a great core of guys."

The Sixers got Harden from Brooklyn hours before the trade deadline last Thursday along with Paul Millsap for Simmons, guard Seth Curry, center Andre Drummond and a pair of first-round draft picks. Their press conference to introduce him began shortly after Simmons spoke for the first time in Brooklyn.

The Sixers were 34-22 on Tuesday afternoon, 2 1/2 games behind Eastern Conference leader Miami.

Philadelphia's front office is elated to have a superstar to play alongside Embiid.

"Having an MVP and a guy on pace to be MVP if he can keep it up is really exciting," 76ers general manager Daryl Morey said. "You're looking at pretty long odds if you don't have two great players at that level."

Said coach Doc Rivers: "Being the winner is hard and that's what we want to become and that's why we made trades like this."

Harden's scoring average this season of 22.5 points is down slightly from his career average of 25.0, and he believes he'll bring more than just scoring to the 76ers.

"My job is to help be the leader, to push guys and get that swagger out of guys every night because ultimately that's' going to help us get a championship," he said.

Harden doesn't anticipate problems playing alongside Embiid.

"We're both at a high level to where we'll figure it out," he said.

Harden, who is making $44.3 million this year, said he will opt into his player option of $46.8 million next year to remain with the 76ers. He said he was disappointed things didn't work out in Brooklyn, where there were high expectations after he joined stars Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving in a trade last season.

But injuries and Irving's vaccination status led the so-called Big Three to play just 16 games together.

"Me and (Irving) are really good friends," Harden said. "That's (vaccination status is) his personal preference. But it definitely did impact the team because originally me, Kyrie and KD on the court and winning covers up a lot of that stuff, but it was unfortunate that we played 16 games out of whatever it was. It is what it is, but being here in Philly is an opportunity that I'm looking forward to."

He's also looking forward to playing in front of Philadelphia's fans, who have been giddy since the trade announcement. Fans erupted when a video of Harden on the video screen that ended with him in a photoshopped 76ers jersey was shown in Philadelphia's last two games.

Popular, productive 'Mr. National' Ryan Zimmerman retires

By HOWARD FENDRICH
AP NATIONAL WRITER

AP

Washington Nationals' Ryan Zimmerman singles in the eighth inning of an opening day baseball game against the Atlanta Braves at Nationals Park, Tuesday, April 6, 2021, in Washington.

Known to many as Mr. National, Ryan Zimmerman was there for it all with the baseball club in D.C.

The first draft pick in Washington Nationals history, and the public face of the franchise, he lived through 100-loss seasons, playoff heartache and, finally, a World Series championship. And now, at age 37, he's ready to move on.

In many ways an old-school player, Zimmerman announced his retirement via the new-school method of a Twitter post on Tuesday, ending a decorated playing career in which he became the Nationals' leader in most major hitting categories and boosted his only major league team to its only title.

"When we first met I was a 20-year-old kid fresh out of the University of Virginia," he wrote in his open letter, addressed to the city of Washington. "I had no idea how unbelievable the next 17 years of my life were going to be."

Zimmerman was picked fourth overall in the June 2005 draft during the Nationals' first season in the nation's capital after moving from Montreal. He made his major league debut that September and hit .397 in 20 games, giving a glimpse of what was to come.

"Ryan will forever be Mr. National. From the walk-off home runs, to carrying the World Series trophy down Constitution Avenue, to the final day of the 2021 regular season when our fans gave him an ovation that none of us will soon forget, Ryan gave us all 17 years of amazing memories," team owner Mark Lerner said in a statement.

Popular and productive, Zimmerman was a two-time All-Star, won a Gold Glove at third base and helped the Nationals reach the postseason five times, capped by their run to the 2019 championship.

In the NL wild-card game that year, Zimmerman's two-out, pinch-hit single off Milwaukee relief ace Josh Hader keyed a three-run rally in the eighth inning for a 4-3 victory. He later hit the first World Series homer in franchise history, connecting against Houston ace Gerrit Cole in the opener. Washington went on to win in seven games.

Zimmerman set Nationals career records for RBIs (1,061), home runs (284), hits (1,846) and games (1,799), among other marks.

He batted .277 in 16 seasons with a career .341 on-base percentage and .475 slugging percentage. He also connected for 11 walk-off homers, the seventh-highest total ever — those include a game-ending shot with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning against the NL East rival Atlanta Braves on March 30, 2008, to win the regular-season debut of Nationals Park, the team's new stadium.

Zimmerman became the Nationals' third baseman in 2006 and stayed there full-time through 2013. After spending time in the outfield and infield in 2014, he took over at first base in 2015.

Zimmerman opted to sit out the pandemic-delayed 2020 season because of COVID-19 concerns.

"I have a 3-week-old baby. My mother has multiple sclerosis and is super high-risk," Zimmerman wrote in a story for The Associated Press a month before the season finally began in late July.

Zimmerman returned last year and hit .243 with 14 home runs and 46 RBIs in 110 games. His wife, Heather, gave birth to the couple's fourth child last month.

"Although my baseball career has come to an end, my family and I will continue to be heavily involved in the DMV community," Zimmerman wrote in his retirement announcement.

"You have given so much to us over the past 17 years; it is now time for us to give back to you. We look forward to continuing many of our community programs and starting new ones in the future. Our kids will be raised here, as this is now our home, and we couldn't be more excited. So this is not a goodbye but more of a 'see you around,'" he said.

Zimmerman created the ziMS Foundation in 2006 to help those with multiple sclerosis and, with his wife, established the Pros for Heroes COVID-19 Relief Fund in 2020.

Zimmerman was nominated six times by the Nationals for the Roberto Clemente Award presented by Major League Baseball.

"Ryan's numbers and accomplishments speak for themselves, but the way he led by example and was respected not only in our clubhouse but around the game — that is what I will remember most about his career," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said.

At Skaggs trial, 4 MLB players testify they received drugs

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP)—Four major league players testified Tuesday that they received oxycodone pills from a former Los Angeles Angels employee accused of providing Tyler Skaggs the drugs that led to the pitcher's overdose death.

Pitchers Matt Harvey, Mike Morin and Cam Bedrosian and first baseman C.J. Cron all took the stand and described bits and pieces of recreational drug use allegedly going on in and around the Angels three years ago, when they played for the team. They were with the Angels at some point from 2017-19, the years federal prosecutors say Eric Kay obtained drugs for players. Kay faces drug distribution and drug conspiracy charges.

Prosecutors rested their case to finish the most dramatic day of the weeklong trial, which included testimony from Skaggs' widow about the last time she saw her husband and the last text she received from him the night before he was found dead in a suburban Dallas hotel room.

"I'm sorry, guys," Carli Skaggs told the 10-woman, two-man jury at one point during several pauses to try to speak more clearly or compose herself. "This is just really hard for me."

Skaggs' emotional appearance came after her husband's former teammates spent the morning explaining their own drug use, how they got drugs from Kay, Skaggs and other sources. They also said the use of oxycodone was common around the majors, an unsettling image for a league just a generation removed from its devastating steroids era.

The defense, which is disputing the prosecution's contention that Kay delivered drugs to Skaggs after the team traveled to Texas, opens its case Wednesday in downtown Fort Worth. The federal court is about 15 miles from the home of the Texas Rangers where the Angels were supposed to play the day Skaggs' body was found.

After saying he was subpoenaed and testifying only because he has immunity from prosecution, Harvey acknowledged being a cocaine user before and during his season with the Angels in 2019. The former New York Mets star said he tried oxycodone provided by Skaggs during his season with the Angels and also provided drugs to Skaggs.

Morin and Cron testified to longer periods of getting oxycodone from Kay, while Bedrosian said he received three or four pills once and gave the rest back after taking one and not liking the way it made him feel.

Of the four players, only Cron is on a major league roster (Colorado Rockies). The others are free agents; Harvey, who played last year for the Orioles, said he believes his testimony will threaten his career. Andrew Heaney, one of Skaggs' closest friends with the Angels and now under contract with the rival Los Angeles Dodgers, was the first government witness last week.

Skaggs, 27, was found dead July 1, 2019, the day after the team had traveled from Los Angeles and before the start of a series against the Rangers. A coroner's report said Skaggs had choked to death on his vomit, and a toxic mix of alcohol, fentanyl and oxycodone were in his system.

Kay served as the team's public relations contact on many road trips, and the trip to Texas was his first since returning from rehab. Kay was placed on leave shortly after Skaggs' death and never returned to the team.

Prosecutors are trying to establish that Kay was the only one who could have provided the drugs that led to Skaggs' death, and that the drugs were delivered after the team arrived in Texas. The defense counters that Skaggs had multiple suppliers, and that the last time Kay gave him drugs was before the team left.

Harvey said Skaggs had another source but didn't get many drugs from that source. Harvey said he had his own drug supplier on the East Coast, and said he got oxycodone for Skaggs from that supplier.

Harvey said Skaggs asked for pills before a road trip in June 2019 because he wanted to feel "loosey-goosey" before a start. Harvey said Skaggs told him he once crushed an oxycodone pill and snorted it on a toilet paper dispenser in the Angels' clubhouse.

The defense asked Harvey and Morin if they were aware of the danger of mixing alcohol and oxycodone, and they said they were. Defense attorney Michael Molfetta asked Harvey if he ever asked Skaggs to be careful.

"Looking back, I wish I had," Harvey said. "In baseball you do everything you can to stay on the field. At the time, I felt as a teammate I was just helping him get through whatever he needed to get through."

Joeten Motors offers '22 Honda Civic as hole-in-one prize

Joeten Motors has announced that it is offering a brand new 2022 Honda Civic Sport Hatchback as a hole-in-one prize in the upcoming 17th Annual NMC Foundation Golf Tournament. The golf tournament is scheduled for March 19 at the LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort.

"Joeten Motors is devoted to supporting higher education and workforce development in the CNMI," said Matthew Deets, general manager of Joeten Motors. "We are excited to be part of the NMC Foundation Golf Tournament again and look forward to a successful event in March."

The 2022 NMC Golf Open will be the first major golf tournament of the year.

"We are glad that Joeten Motors is joining us this year as a major sponsor again," said NMC president Galvin Deleon Guerrero, EdD. "Joeten Motors' hole-in-one donation raises the excitement and anticipation of the tournament. We are grateful for their support."

NMC

Joeten Motors has announced that it is offering a brand new 2022 Honda Civic Sport Hatchback as a hole-in-one prize in the upcoming 17th Annual NMC Foundation Golf Tournament. In this pre-pandemic photo are NMC students and employees along with NMC president Galvin Deleon Guerrero, EdD and Joeten Motors representatives Matthew Deets, Boss Alvarez, and Peter Tenorio.

NMC's Golf Open will be held on the east course of the Saipan LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort. Showtime is at 6am, and the shotgun start will be at 7am. The tournament will follow a medal play format.

First place winners in the men's Championship, A, B, C, Senior, and Ladies Flights (low gross and low net) will each receive $500, while $300 and $200 will go to the second and third place finishers, respectively. Hole-in-one prizes also include a $5,000 hole-in-one prize from McDonald's and a 2022 Hyundai Kona N-Line from Triple J Motors. The tournament will also feature many other items such as raffle prizes like smartphones, hotel stays, meals, and much more.

Interested players can still register for the tournament by visiting www.marianas.edu/golf2022 or by emailing NMC Foundation coordinator Carla Sablan at carla.sablan@marianas.edu.

The college is asking companies, organizations, or individuals who are interested in sponsoring holes and/or for any in-kind or cash donation to help support the CNMI's post-secondary institution. For more information on how to become a sponsor, call 237-6780. ***(PR)***

For Goepper, another Olympic medal and clear

ZHANGJIAKOU, China (AP)—Before even thinking about going big on the slopestyle course, freestyle skier Nick Goepper had to work on something more important — himself.

The newly minted Olympic silver medalist cheerfully announced he's "doing good" these days from a mental health perspective. That's notable given some of the dark days he encountered after first climbing the Olympic podium, eight years ago in Sochi.

"I've done a lot of work off the slope on myself," Goepper said Wednesday after finishing behind teammate Alex Hall. "Even more work there than I've done on the slope."

As last year's Summer Olympics approached, and then during the Tokyo Games themselves, Naomi Osaka, Simone Biles and Noah Lyles were among the big-name athletes who unapologetically brought the subject of mental health, and the way it impacts athletes and the public, to the fore.

Goepper, who had been outspoken about his own struggles long before that, said he appreciated that he had company.

In years past, he had told about contemplating suicide shortly after Sochi. He entered a rehab facility. He said he alienated friends and family, then had to win back their trust. He had to rediscover his passion for skiing.

"That's the most important — to get a good foundation, just as a person, before you can go kick (expletive) and do corks," Goepper said.

For Goepper, the post-2014 experience equaled a classic case of "Post-Olympic Depression." Athletes, especially in the Olympic world, work their whole lives for a moment that can take 60, maybe 90, seconds. They win. Or lose. The torch goes out and the shine from the Games fades. In the case of sports such as freestyle skiing, life goes on and most people turn the page.

A 2020 HBO Sports documentary narrated by Michael Phelps, "The Weight of Gold," spoke poignantly on the topic, with everyone from Phelps to Shaun White to Lolo Jones to Bode Miller relating their experiences.

Wahoo fishing derby postponed to March 12

The 2nd Annual Wahoo Fishing Derby on Tinian previously scheduled for February 2022 has been postponed to March 12, 2022. For more information, contact Ray Dela Cruz Jr. at rtdelacruz@dfemscnmi.com or (670) 284-0318. ***(PR)***

NMI

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of Patricia Surima and Jeanelyn Cardinio downing Serrano and NMBA general secretary Christy Villaflor in the finale.

Cardino also played in the C women's singles and got the gold after defeating Villaflor, while Paolo Quidato settled for the silver after losing to Ebuen in the C men's singles. The NMI's other silver medal finish was courtesy of the duo of Andreau Galvez and Jordan Pangilinan, who bowed to C.J. Estipona and John Conducto in the open men's doubles finals.

After their strong showing in the Guam tournament, which served as their first pre-Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 competition, the 13 NMI national team members returned to Saipan last Tuesday and will resume their training session next week.

The squad is happy with its medal haul, but the group is more thankful for the opportunity to finally compete against players outside Saipan.

"The badminton tournament on Guam was a great success. Everyone from both associations (Guam National Badminton Federation and Northern Marianas Badminton Association) had a blast and it was a great opportunity for our new players to get that playing experience and for the rest of us to see what we need to work more on," Guerrero said.

Meanwhile, NMBA president Merlie Tolentino thanked GNBF members and officials led by president Sandra Low and the volunteers in the tournament for hosting a competition that's important to both NMI and Guam as the two countries prepare for the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022. Tolentino added the NMBA is pleased with the performance on the NMI National Badminton Team and she hopes that the experience in Guam will further inspire them to continue working hard as they are headed for an even tougher competition in the Mini Games. The badminton tournament in the Mini Games will run from June 20 to 25, while the entire event will take place from June 17 to 25.

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down on NMI players, but for the past several years, we have proven that we can play at a higher level. So, with us joining a collegiate league, we will prepare ourselves for every practice and every game to keep up with the good reputation that NMIFA's program has built through the years," said the TanHoldings FC standout Goto.

'Come back, give back'

NMIFA president Jerry Tan was among the well-wishers in the signing ceremony for the three NMI players and thanked their parents and clubs for supporting Goto, Diaz, and Bachani in their journey. He also reminded the three players that they are still part of the national team program and are expected to be back home to represent the NMI in future competitions.

NMIFA technical director Michiteru Mita seconded Tan and encouraged the incoming Bucs players to take advantage of what they will learn in the collegiate ranks, bring the knowledge and experience back home and share it to their fellow NMI players, especially the young ones.

NMIFA Executive Committee members Superior Court Associate Judge Wesley M. Bogdan and Norman Del Rosario were also present at the ceremony and acknowledged the three players' hard work and commitment that allowed that to have the opportunity to pursue higher education as well as continue their passion for soccer.

"It's an honor for us to see our players going to college and playing the sport we all love," Bogdan added.

Goto, Diaz, and Bachani are expected to compete for the Bucs this fall season. Park University of Gilbert, Arizona plays in the California Pacific Conference of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.

"Thank you to everyone who supported us and continues to help us be a better player and a person on and off the court. We will do our best to make you proud," Goto said.

LEAGUES

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cancel ongoing interscholastic leagues in volleyball, basketball, and badminton and replaced them with tournaments.

"With the COVID-19 surge occurring throughout the islands, the PSS Athletic Programs elected to err on the side of safety in deciding to postpone play. Our schools, students, staff, teams, partner federations, and community has been stretched to the limit with rampant infections. As we work to resume normalcy (whatever that is?), we also do not want to be part of the spread. Arriving at the decision to postpone play was a difficult one, but again, the safety of the students, coaches, and community is our top priority," said PSS athletics program director Nick Gross.

The shift to tournament play starts this Saturday, Feb. 19, with the Co-ed Elementary Volleyball Championships at the ChaCha Oceanview Middle School from 8am to 12pm.

Over at the TSL Sports Complex in Gualo Rai, the TakeCare Interscholastic Badminton League will resume also this Saturday with co-ed middle schoolers seeing action from 8am to 11am and co-ed high schoolers taking to the floor from 1pm to 4pm.

The Girls Middle School Volleyball Championships will be held at the Koblerville Gymnasium on Feb. 25 and 26, while the Boys Middle School Volleyball Championships will play on the same venue on March 11 and 12.

Last but not the least, the IT&E Interscholastic Girls and Boys High School Basketball Championships will be held at the Marianas High School Gymnasium from March 3 to 5.

"We're excited to move forward with tournament play in the middle school volleyball division at the Koblerville Gymnasium managed by the NMI Rollers. The facility is open air and we will have additional mitigation measures in place to do our part to stay COVID-free. For example, we're procuring canopies and picnic tables for the parents and supporters that will be placed around the building so that only athletes, coaches, and officials will be allowed onto the playing area inside the gym," said Gross.

Like in previous years, the PSS Athletic Programs has invited Tinian and Rota schools to partake of the scaled-down interscholastic tournaments.

"We look forward to Tinian and Rota squads joining play and will be modifying our typical double-elimination format in lieu of pool play followed by a single-elimination format to decide this year's champions!" added Gross.

Tanapag Middle School volleyball coach Catherine Woodruff welcomes the decision of the PSS Athletic Programs to change the league format due to the pandemic currently raging on the island.

"While it is much better for the players to have a league to interact more with other teams and develop their skills, I am thankful that at least they can have the experience of a tournament rather than the season being suspended altogether," she said.

Saipan International School volleyball coach Mili Saiki seconded Woodruff's assessment when she said, "It is fine as long as the kids have another opportunity to play."

Suns beat Clippers, adding on to NBA-best 47-10 record

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NMI badminton players haul 6 gold medals

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of the NMI National Badminton Team pose for a photo before competing in the 2022 Guam Badminton Invitational Tournament over the weekend at the Guam Badminton Sports Center in Barrigada.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The NMI National Badminton Team had a fruitful campaign in the 2022 Guam Badminton Invitational Tournament after collecting six gold medals and three silvers in the weekend competition held at the Guam Badminton Sports Center in Barrigada.

Janelle Pangilinan, who will be making her second tour of duty for the NMI in the 2022 Mini Games after playing in the 2019 Pacific Games in Apia, Samoa, led the visiting squad's medal haul after winning three golds. She and Nate Guerrero gave the NMI its first gold medal in the Guam event after topping the open mixed doubles division and got two more after prevailing in the open women's singles and doubles. She partnered with fellow NMI player Jenine Savellano in the women's doubles to finish ahead of Guam's Elaine Labang and Jennica Silva in the rankings. In the singles, Pangilinan was undefeated in the round-robin play, besting four other entries

In other results, Leonard Manuel and Mikamaika Serrano handed the NMI another gold medal when they won over Guam's Kyle Ebuen and Gina Factor in the C mixed doubles. In the C women's doubles, it was an all-CNMI duel with the pair

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3 brace for challenges in collegiate ranks

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

NMI players Jeremiah Diaz, Kohtaro Goto, and Dev Bachani formally committed to play for Park University, embracing the responsibilities and challenges they will be facing as they join the collegiate ranks.

Goto, Bachani, and Diaz signed up for the Buccaneers in front of their family members and Northern Mariana Islands Football Association officials during a ceremony last Tuesday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville. It will be the first time in the history of NMI soccer that three of its players will suit up for the same collegiate squad and the Bucs signees vowed to represent the islands well and bring the strong work ethic and right attitude they learned with the NMI-FA program.

"I will stay committed to the team and the sport just like what I am with the NMI National Team and my club and do the required work to prove that I am worthy of a spot on the team," said Diaz, who is part of the NMI Boys U18 National Team and also plays for MP United Football Club.

Diaz's MP United teammate Bachani, meanwhile, said the chemistry and teamwork they have developed while playing for the NMI national squad will be very helpful as they play for the Bucs and try to make an impact on their new team. Goto, on the other hand, will work harder to show what NMI players are capable of.

"Teams maybe looking

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO

From left, Jeremiah Diaz, Kohtaro Goto, and Dev Bachani sign up to play for Park University of Gilbert, Arizona during a ceremony last Tuesday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

Interscholastic leagues shift to tourney format

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Saipan Southern High School's Frankie Satur takes a shot against Kagman High School defenders during the opening of the IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League last month at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Pressed for time because of the postponements brought about by the COVID-19 spread in the community, the Public School System Athletic Programs has opted to

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